THE CHURCH'S

YEAR OF GRACE

Easter to Pentecost

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The Church's

YEAR OF GRACE

by

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SECOND EDITION

revised according to the directives for the Simplification of the Rubrics and the Restored Holy Week Liturgy

Volume 3

Easter to Pentecost

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The Proper of the Season

THE SOLEMN FEAST OF EASTER

**This is the day the Lord has made,
let us be glad and rejoice in it!**

We have scaled the mountain, and victory is ours! The goal toward which we strove during forty anxious days, the goal already outlined for us at the beginning of Advent, has finally been achieved. Light now triumphs over darkness, and a divine Sun beams Its warm, clear light into the kingdom of God's elect.

Throughout Advent as in a night we yearned for the Light. At Christmas the Light came suddenly into the world, pierced the darkness with Its rays and illumined God's holy City (the Church) by Its glory. This was the glad message of the Christmas season. But even in the midst of Christmas joy a discordant strain was heard, one that grew continually louder and louder, "The Light shines in the darkness; and the darkness grasped it not." Already during the octave of Christmas we heard the cry of suffering, a cry that has never since been absent.

On Septuagesima Sunday the passion theme became dominant,

displacing all other approaches to the mystery. With the first Sunday of Lent the divine David entered the arena to do battle with the giant Goliath. The whole Lenten season may well be regarded as a battle — the battle of Light against darkness. Historically it was the battle of Christ with the Jews; at present it is His battle in the souls of those destined for grace and glory (baptism and penance motif). True, the Light was crushed out temporarily as Jesus died on Calvary; but just as Its beams unexpectedly pierced the gloom on Christmas night, so now after the tribulations of Holy Week, the Easter Sun rises to shine forever.

Today is Easter, the Feast of feasts, the climax to the Church's year of grace. It is a solemnity which the faithful formerly extended over a period of three days, while the neophytes (newly baptized), robed in their white baptismal garments, celebrated it for an entire week. Hence, a proper Mass for each day. Never is Mother Church's joy more unrestrained, more jubilant and loud.

The liturgy of Easter-day, which colors the entire octave, stresses a) the resurrection of Christ, b) baptism. Actually, the second complements the first, while the first is the symbol and cause of the second. Through baptism Christ's resurrection is repeated in the members of His mystical Body. Define baptism as the resurrection of Jesus in a human soul.

As one deepens his appreciation of the liturgy, he realizes more and more that the Masses of Easter week are among the finest, the most stirring and dramatic in the entire Missal. Two themes are basic — first, the events connected with the resurrection; and secondly, the stational churches. It would be helpful to regard these Masses as a grand Easter drama in which we were the players; the more actively we entered into our roles the better we would understand the mystery. The liturgy follows the historical sequence in part; in part, its own genius and inspiration. There are always good reasons for the setting and the score.

The drama begins at an early hour on Easter morn (the vigil service). Like Mary Magdalen and the holy women we come to

the sepulcher at daybreak (*quae lucescit*). We feel the earthquake, we see the angel removing the stone, we observe the guards fleeing. To us the angel announces the Easter tidings and bids us bring the glad message to Christ's disciples (the rest of the faithful). The divine drama continues on Easter morning "when the sun has risen, *orto jam sole*." Again we play the part of the women and hear the angel's consoling words, "You shall see Him, as He told you." With this assurance we return to our homes.

During the following days we are privileged to witness six apparitions of our risen Savior. On Monday we play the part of the disciples from Emmaus who recognized Him in the breaking of bread; on Tuesday we are the apostles and the disciples who "touched" the Lord and ate with Him on the first Easter evening (so far the apparitions are arranged chronologically).

Jesus appears to us on Wednesday as we re-enact the scene on the shores of Genesareth when He invited the seven apostles to a meal (fish and bread). The Gospel says expressly of this event, "This is now the third time that Jesus manifested Himself to His disciples." It should be noted that these three apparitions (Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday) are immediately associated with a meal (think of the Eucharist).

Thursday finds us in the role of Mary Magdalen who with love and longing sought and found her Savior. Because of holy Mass we too can say, "I have seen the Lord." On Friday, with the multitude of disciples, we see the Lord on the mountain (i.e., the altar) in His farewell appearance. His last words to the white-robed neophytes are most consoling, "I am with you all days. . . ."

On Saturday the Easter drama comes to a close for the newly baptized. Instead of another apparition account, the Gospel contains an allusion to the robes of baptism. Before our eyes Peter and John race to the sepulcher; historically this incident occurred at the beginning of the week, but it finds a place here because of the symbolism of the station church (St. John Lateran) and the linens in the tomb (baptismal robes). On the octave day a sixth apparition is described: "After eight days, His disciples were

again inside, and Thomas with them." Following the apostle's example each of us should stretch forth his hand to touch the Lord. With this the Easter Mass-drama ends.

Not only do the various apparitions of the risen Christ influence the textual composition of the Masses, but the patron saints of the stational churches likewise enter deeply into their message. For in these saints Christ's resurrection re-occurred in persons like ourselves. On Easter eve we assemble in the basilica of the Most Holy Redeemer in order to "rise with Christ"; for a patron and sponsor the newly baptized have St. John the Baptist.

In the morning the station church is St. Mary Major. This fact seems to have no relation to the text apart from the similarity of names in the Gospel — Magdalen's first name was Mary. The liturgy, however, wants us to celebrate Easter as did the Mother of Jesus, with a joyful heart. The composition of the *Regina Caeli* has been associated with today's stational church (according to legend angels first sang the anthem at the consecration of St. Mary Major).

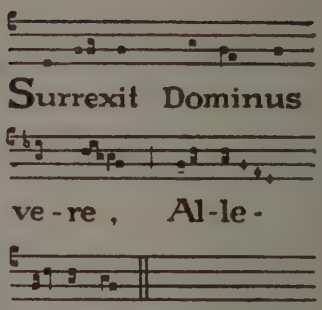
Monday we celebrate Easter at the basilica of St. Peter. In the Mass formulary there are several direct references and allusions to the prince of the apostles. During the Epistle "Peter stands in the midst of the people" and addresses them. The Gospel tells us that Jesus "appeared to Simon," a passage that is repeated in the Communion verse (do not overlook the personal application during the sacrificial banquet).

For Tuesday's liturgy we gather around St. Paul. What tremendous significance the Easter mystery had for him! Since there is no mention of Christ appearing to Paul in the Gospels, a passage was chosen that describes an apparition to the Eleven — Paul was associated in spirit with the apostolic college. The first sentence of the Epistle places him in our midst, "Paul stood up and spoke." Consequently we hear the Lesson from his own lips. Of him in a special manner our Lord's words hold true, "Among all the nations remission of sins should be preached in His name."

On Wednesday the newly baptized assemble with their sponsor, St. Lawrence. For him Easter was the day when he died on

the gridiron; hence the Gospel of the fish broiled on the live coals. On Thursday we gather in the Church of the Twelve Apostles. From them we have received the faith. On Friday our thoughts spontaneously revert to the events on Golgotha eight days ago; the station is, therefore, at St. Mary's of the Martyrs. On Saturday we return to the church of baptism to put aside our white baptismal robes.

The stational observance of Easter week must be classed as one of the most venerable monuments of Roman Christianity. How inspiring and edifying it is to watch the white-robed newly baptized march from one station to another in triumphal procession. I would not hesitate to say that at no time in the entire liturgical year does the Mass liturgy exemplify a greater unity of theme, a greater profundity of thought, or more immediate spiritual usefulness than during Easter week.



EASTER WEEK

EASTER SUNDAY

Station at St. Mary Major

The Lamb — the Lion

The blessed experience last night of rising anew in spirit with the risen Christ continues today, continues throughout the coming week, throughout all of Eastertide. It is *the day that the Lord has made.*

There is no break in the mystery, the sacred Triduum that brings Lent to its close must not be dissociated from the flow of Easter grace. It would be tragic if this deduction were made from the fact that a new volume in the *Year of Grace* begins at this point.

Although Matins and Lauds for Easter Sunday are included in the Vigil Service and the Office proper begins with Prime today, the essential oneness of the whole week's liturgy would call for early and extended reflections upon the mystery's orienting Hours of Matins and Lauds. So much of the feast's content is contained in these two portions of the Divine Office that we

should at once strive toward a full appreciation of today's glory, which sets the pace and pattern for the entire week.

1. **Easter Week Matins.** "The Lord has truly risen, alleluia." With these words the invitatory proclaims Easter's joyful message to redeemed mankind.

Matins are short, the shortest of the year, a good example of the week's liturgy which throughout is classic for its cryptic beauty and brevity. Man lacks the ability to express adequately emotion that is truly great and profound; therefore, since words cannot do justice to the mystery, the liturgy follows a course of absolute simplicity. The customary hymns are absent, the psalms are not especially chosen for the occasion, etc. We are almost disappointed by the austere plainness of the festal office.

There is but one nocturn to Matins; it consists of the first three psalms of the Psalter. At first thought we certainly would expect psalms having a special relation to the mystery. Apparently the reasons for the order given are: a) the Church wants to show that at Easter we start our life over again. We are new men with a fresh beginning. b) So great is our joy, so overpowering the mystery, that the Church does not need to resort to artificial means to stimulate pious emotions. For this reason the hymns are omitted, and therefore too it should suffice to take the first three psalms as in the Bible. 3. These first three psalms represent the entire Psalter; the Church's sublime message is: All the psalms praise the risen Christ.

The readings at Matins are from a sermon preached by St. Gregory on Easter Sunday in the basilica of St. Mary Major (an important liturgical station). "You have heard, dearly beloved brethren, how the holy women who had followed the Lord came to the sepulcher with sweet spices. They had loved Him in life, now they would serve Him with all care and tenderness in death. But these things happened in order to signify certain acts that must be done in holy Church. And thus it becomes necessary to hear what once happened so that we may know what we must now do by way of imitation.

"Therefore, when we who believe in the Lord who died for

us come and seek Him, bearing the perfume of personal virtues joined to a reputation for good works, we do indeed come to His sepulcher bringing sweet spices. But those women who came with sweet spices, saw angels. This should make it immediately obvious that the citizens of heaven may be readily seen by such who go forth with the perfume of good acts and holy desires to seek the Lord.

"Moreover, we would do well to determine why it was that the angel was sitting on the right side. What indeed is signified by the left hand, if not this present life? and what by the right hand, if not eternal life? Accordingly we read in the Canticle of Canticles: His left hand is under my head and with His right hand He embraces me (Cant. 2:6). Therefore, since our Redeemer had already passed beyond the corruption of present existence, the angel who came to announce His eternal life sat on the right side.

"He appeared clothed in a white robe because he announced the joys of our feast. The shimmering whiteness of his raiment indeed proclaims the splendor of our solemn festival. Is it really ours, or his? Surely the more correct answer would be: both his and ours. For the resurrection of our Redeemer is indeed our feast because it renders us immortal, but it is also a feast for the angels because their number was completed upon our admission into heaven."

3. Easter Week Lauds. The official prayer book of the Church, the Breviary, has two daily morning prayers, Lauds and Prime. The first is creation's joyous morning prayer, the second serves as sinful man's sober preparation for the coming day. At the same time Lauds are the Church's song of resurrection, the prayer in which she daily celebrates Easter and the triumph from the tomb.

Of all the Hours, Lauds are perhaps the most beautiful, its symbolism the most natural and moving. Day is beginning to break. Dawn is extending its rosy fingers over the horizon. Night has been vanquished and nature is celebrating her return to life. The petals of the flowers are unfolding, the birds are chirping their

morning songs. Historically it is the hour in which Christ our Savior conquered death and rose from the grave. Man too now rises from his bed; the risen Savior and re-enlivened nature speak to him of spiritual resurrection. "If you have risen with Christ, seek the things that are above."

This, then, is the symbolism and message of Lauds: Christ is risen, nature is reborn, man comes to life spiritually. This background helps us to appreciate the Hour and to understand why the alleluia and nature psalms occur so frequently. Because every Sunday is a memorial of Easter, Sunday Lauds give special prominence to the resurrection theme — note the large number of alleluias.

Finally, in Lauds on Easter the lines of emphasis are tripled as the yearly anniversary of Christ's resurrection, the weekly memorial of His rising from the tomb as well as the very hour occur simultaneously. Realizing this we are better able to do full honor to the transcendent excellence of Easter Lauds.

While the psalms for Matins on greater feasts ordinarily are specially selected, the psalms for Lauds on feasts as well as on Sundays are always the same. The reason for this is that Matins are a form of meditation, a spiritual drama of the day's mystery; Lauds, on the other hand, are simply a morning prayer. The psalms are songs of praise, they have no inherent or necessary connection with the theme of the feast; their content links them to the spirit of the liturgical Hour in which they occur. The task of reminding the worshiper of the day's peculiar mystery falls upon the antiphons.

The purpose of the antiphons at Lauds is entirely different from their purpose at Matins. At Matins they give the key to the psalm; they indicate the relevance of the psalm to the particular feast; at Lauds they have no connection with the individual psalm but form a garland of flowers that embellish the psalms and keep reminding us of the day's central themes. The result is a beautiful mosaic. We celebrate our own spiritual resurrection, nature is celebrating hers, and the antiphon after each psalm keeps before us the joyous truths of the Easter mystery. And thus

it is relatively simple to combine the spirit of the feast with that of Lauds because all lines center on the thought of resurrection.

The antiphons at Lauds this week describe in dramatic fashion the events which occurred at the corresponding hour on the first Easter morn; accordingly they reflect the action while the psalms supply the accompanying chorus of praise on the lips of nature and Mother Church — reflections which in a way resemble the responsories between lessons. Easter Lauds, therefore, may be called creation's paeon of praise in the presence of Christ's resurrection, and likewise her fervent morning prayer.

3. The Easter Mass (Resurrexi). The High Mass on Easter day brings the feast to its climax. All that we looked forward to in word and deed during the sacred Triduum now becomes real, actual, and present through the mystery in which we are participating. Christ, our paschal Lamb, is immolated!

A single unifying theme binds the whole formulary together, one which like a refrain gladdens our ears repeatedly. It is the sentence from St. Paul: Christ, our paschal Lamb, is immolated! (*Epist., Grad., Seq., Comm.*). St. Mary Major is the stational church because the first one whom we wish to meet with hearts full of Easter joy is God's own Mother. As we enter the edifice,

Pictured is the moment of Christ's resurrection! His sentiments are revealed in the Introit. The women's offertory procession to the tomb is symbolized by the ointment jars. The medallions show Christ as the Lamb, and as Judah's triumphant Lion.

He who has risen from the dead greets us, "*Resurrexi* — I have risen!" This is our Savior's jubilant cry as He returns to earth, His morning prayer as He rose from the sleep of death. What were His first thoughts? Full self-surrender to the Father with whom He enjoys the most intimate union. But today Christ is not alone. As Head of the mystical Body, He leads all who are united to Him to His Father's loving heart.

As an Easter song the *Gloria* is peculiarly appropriate, for in it we praise the "Lamb who took away the sins of the world." The *Oration* draws a parallel between the day's mystery and our response to it, viz., He who triumphed on Golgotha triumphed over death and opened the gates of heaven for us; therefore ask God for victory over death and sin and for the grace that leads to heavenly glory. For St. Paul the Old Testament feast of the Pasch typified the Easter mystery — Christ, *our* paschal Lamb, is immolated! And now after we have partaken of the sacrificial meal we must cast away forever the leaven of sin.

For the *Gradual* we sing: "This is the day the Lord has made, let us be glad and rejoice in it." During the coming week we will repeat these words at every Hour of the Divine Office. The underlying message is: human speech is too weak to do justice to the tremendous implications of the Easter mystery; therefore we are content with expressing our gratitude and praise in some few appropriate words. The *Alleluia* verse impresses most worshipers very deeply; again we hear the Mass' leit-motif and are thereby readied for its further development in the *Sequence*.

Only since the Middle Ages have sequences been added to Mass formularies, and today's is an excellent example of what a sequence should be, viz., a meditation upon the Alleluia verse. This meditation takes the form of a dialog between Mary Magdalen and the Church. (The sequence, we might add, gave rise to the medieval Easter and Mystery plays, so popular at a somewhat later date.) Peter's disciple, Mark, has the honor of announcing to us Easter's glad tidings when the time for the *Gospel* comes. As the sacred drama proceeds, we take the roles of the pious women who hurried to the grave "when the sun had just risen." From the

mouth of the angel (deacon) we hear the joyful message, knowing that in the Eucharistic banquet we ourselves will behold the risen Savior.

The Offertory procession is our early morning walk with the pious women to the tomb; with our hands filled with sweet spices we feel the earthquake announcing the Lord's resurrection (*Off.*). The liturgy's brief description is most impressive: *Terra tremuit* — the earth shuddered and stood still. During the sacrificial banquet the Lamb is slain and made ready for eating (*Comm.*). The *Secret* and *Postcommunion* are the same as in the vigil Mass; this is another indication that our present formulary was introduced at a later date. Originally the vigil Mass was the feast's principal service. The Secret reminds us that there should be permanent results from what we have just begun through these mysteries. The holy Eucharist is the bond of union in the Communion of Saints; in ancient times this was expressed by the practice of sending portions of the Eucharistic Bread to all neighboring churches.

4. **Easter—Holy Springtime.** Easter is the greatest feast in the Church's calendar. It is the feast from which all others stem, every Sunday is Easter in miniature. Nevertheless, if we are honest with ourselves, we must admit that we no longer realize or appreciate what Easter really means. Other feasts like Christmas, Sacred Heart, and All Souls have taken precedence, while Easter has receded in importance and dignity.

Christians belonging to the Eastern rites have retained a much better realization of the solemnity and the joy which it should occasion. During the first World War, I had the opportunity to observe this at close range. When Easter came, Russian Christians were different men. Even military operations came to a halt, the enemy crossed lines and approached us with eggs and pastry, and embraced our soldiers. In town and village everyone was greeted with "Christ is risen!" and invited into the home as a guest. As liturgically-minded Christians our best efforts must be directed toward making Easter the one feast of paramount importance. Blood and bone must thrill at the very word. How should we

begin? By abandoning a narrow, subjective approach and by giving the solemnity its due place in the Church year and in our hearts.

For me there is a threefold resurrection: a symbolic one in nature, an historical one in Palestine, a spiritual one in the Church and in individual souls.

a) What a glorious spectacle we witness each year as nature awakens from her winter slumbers! What transformation in field and forest as the pall of ice and snow is blown aside by spring's warm winds and buds appear on tree and bush. If our gaze could but penetrate nature's workshops and see the tremendous activity in every sector, how tiny roots are bursting with life-giving sap, ready at a moment's notice to break forth and form the thick, soft carpet of leaves and flowers upon which spring will make her triumphal entry into the land. Today, as I am writing this, the entire landscape is bleak, gray, dead. But in two months the meadows will be green, the trees will be full of blossoms, the birds will be singing, a sense of joy and happiness and well-being will fill the land. For nature will have come to life again.

It should be one of our objectives to regain this sense of close association with nature. The natural rhythm of the seasons should be a source of constant delight. Every tiny flower, every little animal, the rays of the sun, the chirp of birds, everything that spring brings back to us should inspire sentiments of joy and gratitude over our good fortune. However, we must not remain on the plane of nature; for us nature is a holy symbol. It is a picture-book given by God to His children in which they may see His beauty and His love; a picture-book which tells of another world which now at Easter is likewise celebrating resurrection, the world of supernatural life within us.

Spring with its transformation of hill and meadow is, accordingly, a great symbol of an event in sacred history and of an event now taking place within the Church. Springtime is nature executing her Easter liturgy. Neither poetry nor art can even approximate her grand display. In every corner of her vast cathedral

a thousand voices are shouting Alleluia, the voices of creatures that have come to life. Yes, nature holy, sinless, eternal, is holding her Easter rites. Oh, that we had eyes to see this mystery!

b) The perspective changes, and with nature as a backdrop we behold the great redemptive work of Christ. A mighty battle is in progress; life and death, light and darkness are contending for survival. Christ wins. Easter does not simply commemorate the resurrection of Christ as Christmas recalls His birth. That would never be enough! It is impossible for subjective piety to plumb the depths of the Easter mystery, for its approach is simply to commemorate events, e.g., the nativity, circumcision, passion, resurrection. Such a mentality will always object, "Why should the feast of Easter be something so special? Isn't the bitter passion and death of Jesus much more important?"

Now in the mind of the Church Easter is the feast of Christ's full triumph. Rather than singling out isolated events or acts from our Savior's earthly life, she prefers to view the work of redemption as a completed whole. Today, Easter, the incarnate Son of God has finished His redemptive work; He has triumphed over the prince of this world; by rising from the dead He has authenticated His victory and as booty claims redeemed mankind. Such is the fundamental message of Easter.

The early Christians kept but one feast, Easter. And they were right in doing so, for the Easter solemnity embraces all the events in the life of Christ. His birth, baptism, passion, death are all segments of His one great task, the work of man's redemption. At Easter this work reaches its full and final stage. At Easter Christ becomes the Redeemer, the Conqueror, the Father of a new family of human beings. At Easter He becomes the glorified Head of the mystical Body; that Body can now expand unto its predestined fullness, it may now sanctify and divinize all its members.

c) There is still another resurrection proper to Easter, that which takes place in the Church. Just as spring produces new life in the realm of nature, Easter effects spiritual renewal in the Church. Easter is our common birthday as children of God.

To appreciate the profound truths underlying these statements we must again study the spiritual mentality of the first Christians. Originally Lent resembled what I said above concerning the workshop of nature. During Lent the energizing sap of divine life was stored up as the catechumens were instructed for baptism, as the penitents performed imposed exercises, as the faithful repeatedly offered the holy Sacrifice and ate the Bread of life. The season of fast was a fresh and never failing fountain of divine life. Every human act was subjected to a purifying process. Then at Easter a common spiritual resurrection. Together Head and members rose in a new life of grace and holiness.

Because Easter was the anniversary of their baptism, the early Christians had a special love and esteem for the feast. As adults they had received the sacrament during the Easter vigil service, and it had become for them an unforgettable experience. Each year thereafter they relived this experience spiritually with the catechumens. Without effort they realized how Easter was the birthday of their spiritual lives.

We Christians of a different age have been baptized as infants and on days that had no relation to the rhythm of the Church's year of grace; as a result our appreciation of the Easter mystery has suffered badly.

Nevertheless, we know that we constitute the Church of Christ, we are aware of being members of His Body; nor is there the least shade of doubt in our minds that at Easter something similar occurs in this Body as in the world of nature. In springtime nature revives, so too in the Body of Christ a new and holy revival takes place. Eagerly, joyfully let us open our minds and hearts to the energizing forces flowing from our Head so that God's Church may enjoy a spiritual spring.

May today's threefold resurrection resound like a mighty refrain, like a thrice-chanted alleluia in full crescendo — springtime has made its appearance in the land, alleluia! The Lord has completed His redeeming work, alleluia! Our souls have risen anew, alleluia!

EASTER MONDAY

Station at St. Peter

Their eyes were opened, and they recognized Him

Today's Gospel story of the two disciples on their way to Emmaus presents a beautiful transition from Holy Week sadness to Easter joy. We join the happy neophytes as they go to Peter, the first Pope, who now observes a happy Easter after a bitter week of trial and failure. In company with the Emmaus disciples and Peter we continue our Easter celebration.

1. **Divine Office.** During the night hours we reflect upon the Gospel account as history, but in the morning its message becomes a reality in which we share.

The day's Gospel on the two disciples journeying to Emmaus gives Matins its special character. We read a beautiful homily by St. Gregory, one that he delivered to the people in the basilica of the holy apostle Peter on Easter Monday. (This sermon serves as excellent meditation material.)

"Now since these daily feasts present many a spiritual challenge, I will not speak to you at length. In fact, sometimes a few

The design. The Fore-Mass is our Emmaus journey with the risen Savior; our hearts burn within us as He explains to us the Scriptures (right). The middle section illustrates the Introit: the land flowing with milk and honey is the Church. Peter (keys), the day's station saint, unlocks these treasures to us; spiritual milk and honey flow from the rock Christ. At the Eucharistic banquet "our eyes are opened" to a deeper understanding of Christ (left).

brief observations are even of greater value. For scanty rations are eagerly eaten. I have in mind, therefore, to cover the meaning of today's Gospel in a general way rather than in detail, lest a word for word commentary become a heavy burden upon your love.

"You have heard, dear brethren, how the Lord appeared on the road to Emmaus to two disciples who were talking about Him. Although they did not believe in Him, Jesus drew near and accompanied them, but in a manner in which they could not recognize Him. Externally and to their bodily eyes He accommodated Himself to the eyes of their hearts. The two disciples loved Him in a fashion; nevertheless, they hesitated to accept Him into their hearts. Therefore the Lord showed Himself externally present, yet would not reveal His identity. Because they spoke of Him, He came and accompanied them; because they doubted, He concealed from them the form by which they could have recognized Him. True, He spoke with them, chided them for their dullness of perception, and unlocked for them the mysteries of Sacred Writ that referred to Him; yet He pretended as if He wished to continue the journey because He was still excluded from their hearts.

"By acting in this way, however, divine truthfulness, which knows no deceit, was not guilty of duplicity. For the Lord appeared to the disciples exactly as they imagined Him in their hearts. It was necessary that they prove their love for Him at least as a stranger, even though they did not as yet love Him as God. But since those with whom Truth is present cannot be far from charity, they invited Jesus to become their guest, even though He was still a stranger.

"Now why did I say: They invited Him, when the text says: They constrained Him? Because from their example we ought to learn that strangers should not only be invited to share our lodgings, but must be urged to do so. They prepared the table and brought food; then at the breaking of bread they recognized God whom they did not recognize when the Sacred Scriptures were being explained.

"Observe that they were enlightened not by hearing the commands of God but in performing them. Do we not read in holy Scripture: It is not they who hear the Law that are just in the sight of God; but it is they who follow the Law that will be justified? (Rom. 2:13). If, then, one wishes to understand what he has heard, let him hasten to put into action that which he has already grasped. Note that the Lord was not recognized when He was speaking, but He did manifest Himself while He was being served. Therefore, most dear brethren, be zealous in practicing hospitality, love to do charitable acts for the benefit of others. Remember the bidding of St. Paul: Let brotherly love abide in you, and do not forget to entertain strangers; for thereby some have entertained angels unawares (Heb. 13:1–2). There is a similar passage in Peter: Be hospitable to one another without murmuring (1 Pet. 4:9). And eternal Truth Itself has said: I was a stranger and you took Me in (Matth. 25:35).

"A very credible story handed down by our forefathers goes as follows. A certain individual was very zealous in practicing hospitality, both he and all his house. Daily he invited strangers to his table. Among such on a certain day was one who was long remembered. For as the master of the house was busily providing water for his unknown guests, this individual suddenly disappeared at the very moment his host turned to get a jug of water to pour upon his hands. This perplexed him greatly, but that very night Christ appeared and said: On other days you served Me in My members, yesterday you invited Me personally.

"Yes, when Christ shall return for judgment on the last day He will say: As long as you did it for one of these, the least of My brethren, you did it for Me (Matth. 25:40). See, if before judgment He is shown hospitality in one of His members, He Himself will return the favor. And nevertheless we are so remiss in the matter. Remember, brethren, what a great virtue hospitality is! Invite Christ to your table in order that you may be invited by Him to an eternal banquet. If you now open your doors to Christ the Stranger, you will not be strangers to Him on judgment day — He will recognize you and invite you to share in the

kingdom of heaven. To realize this blessed end, may He Himself grant us aid — He who lives and reigns, God, forever and ever. Amen."

The two major antiphons, at sunrise and at sunset, remind us to spend the entire day acting the parts of the two disciples on the road to Emmaus. "Jesus drew near to His disciples on the road and went along with them; but their eyes were held that they should not recognize Him. And He chided them, saying: O foolish ones and slow of heart to believe in all the prophets have spoken, alleluia!" (Ben. Ant.). And in the evening, "What words are these that you are exchanging as you walk and are sad? Alleluia!" (Magn. Ant.).

During the entire Easter season we will find versicles and antiphons referring to or taken from today's Gospel story. The passage that is particularly dear to holy Church, as shown by the fact that it is used daily as the versicle and response at Vespers, is: "Lord, stay with us, for evening is setting in."

2. Holy Mass (Introduxit). The basilica of St. Peter is today's stational church. This accounts for Peter's presence as the Mass begins. As the Moses of the new covenant he addresses us (in ancient art Peter is often represented as Moses): Christ has led you (the newly baptized) into the Promised Land, a land flowing with milk and honey (after holy Communion the neophytes were given milk and honey). Now during the Easter season we should realize that we are living in God's "Promised Land." Then Peter lifts an admonishing finger: May Christ's doctrine remain permanently in your hearts. At these words it would seem as if a tear coursed down the apostle's cheek, he is thinking of his denial (*Confiteor, Kyrie*).

Perfect spiritual freedom is the object of the Church's petition in the *Collect*; for our exile is over, the excommunicated soul has put aside her penitential garb and is now clothed in the joyous raiment of a free child of God — but does it actually enjoy *full* liberty? Is anyone in a position to say: I have broken Satan's yoke to utter bits?

In the *Epistle* St. Peter "stands in the midst of the people."

He addresses us with words he once spoke to the Gentile Cornelius. Quickly he unfolds a panorama of Christ's life as Redeemer, as Good Shepherd, as the Man of Sorrows, as risen from the tomb, and finally as Judge at the Second Coming. Peter is speaking of One whom he loved deeply, One for whom he later died on a cross and for whom he wept rivulets of tears. Now he seeks to engrave Christ indelibly upon our hearts.

Presently the Easter angel (deacon) descends into our midst (*Allel. verse*) to proclaim one of the most beautiful of Gospels. So realistically does St. Luke depict the scene that we almost feel ourselves present; no Gospel anecdote gives the transition from Holy Week to Easter with greater finesse. With sorrowing hearts two disciples walk along in the warm, spring sunshine. Jesus approaches. They do not recognize Him. He consoles them, makes their hearts to glow with love for things divine; then as the drama comes to a climax they realize who He is "in the breaking of bread."

During the Offertory procession we play the part of the holy women who hasten to the grave with jars of precious ointment to do homage to the Lord's body; we too carry gifts to the altar, and as the women expectantly awaited the risen Savior, we long for the glorified, Eucharistic Savior. The *Secret* is the same as that in the Easter vigil Mass and on Easter day itself. During the holy Sacrifice the episode at Emmaus becomes a present reality; we are the disciples who "recognize the Lord in the breaking of bread"; to us as once to Peter the Lord appears (*Comm.*). The reason why Peter is mentioned in the Communion is that the station saint is believed to stand before the assembled faithful as the one who, *par excellence*, prays and preaches, sacrifices and meditates.

The *Postcommunion* too is the same as in the last two formularies; this identity of Secret and Postcommunion is an indication that the Easter feast continues on through the week. The Eucharist makes all of us members of God's one great family (Postc.).

3. The Easter Gospel. There are no Scripture Readings pro-

er to Easter week. This gives us an opportunity to deepen our understanding of the "Gospel of the Forty Days," i.e., the events associated with Christ's resurrection. It is not an easy task to arrange the events given in the four Gospels, particularly the various apparitions, in a chronological order. In the following observations we adopt the opinions of recognized Scripture scholars.

No human beings were present to witness the resurrection itself, an event which occurred early Sunday morning. As an external sign of the fact that Christ had left the tomb, an angel rolled away the stone at its entrance; seeing this the guards fled. Soon a group of holy women and Mary Magdalen came to the sepulcher and found it empty; with quick decision Mary Magdalen hastened back to Peter and John. Meanwhile the remaining women see the angel and are given a message to take to the disciples, but they hide themselves.

Shortly thereafter John, Peter, and Mary Magdalen come running to the tomb (John 20:1f); they find it empty, with certain indications of the resurrection (the folded linens). John and Peter leave, but Magdalen remains and is privileged to be the first to see the risen Redeemer. Jesus then appears to the women as they return to the city, His second appearance (Matth. 28:8f). In the course of the day He appears to Peter, who stood in greatest need of consolation (third appearance). During the afternoon occurred what is expressly called the fourth appearance as Jesus tarried with the disciples on the way to and at Emmaus (Luke 24:13f). Later that night He appeared to the ten apostles and many others in the Upper Room (Luke 24:36f; John 21:19). This was His fifth manifestation.

We read of another appearance eight days later, the one at which Thomas was present and openly professed faith in His Master's presence (sixth appearance — John 21:24). Then the disciples returned to Galilee where the Lord appeared to seven of them on the Sea of Tiberias while they were fishing; it was the occasion on which Peter was given the office of chief shepherd (John 21:1f — seventh appearance). And lastly, on a hill

in Galilee Jesus manifested Himself to all the disciples (St. Paul gives the number as 500) and ordered them to spread the Gospel to all nations (eighth appearance). Christ's last appearance took place as He was on the point of returning to heaven before His ascension.

Whether there were other manifestations to individuals or to groups is not known. Paul alludes to an appearance to James the Less. Many Scripture scholars are of the opinion that Jesus appeared first of all to Mary, His mother. Although the Bible makes no reference to such an appearance, it would be in full accord with natural considerations.

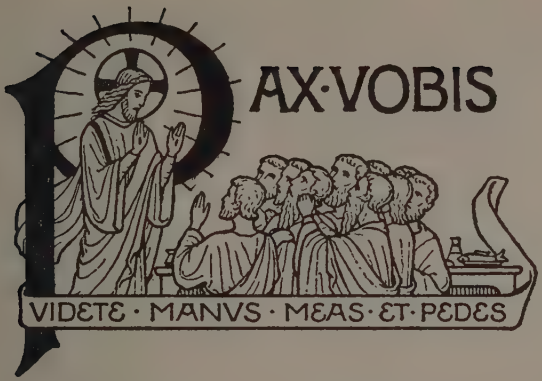
It would be most commendable if advisors for Catholic Action cells and study clubs arranged to discuss these appearances during the Easter season; great spiritual benefits would result. Where such groups do not exist, the topic could be treated during a liturgical holy hour, or in connection with some Easter devotion. Few parts of the Gospels offer greater comfort or contain deeper spiritual values for the soul than the "Gospel of the Forty Days."

EASTER TUESDAY

Station at St. Paul

Peace be to you!
It is I, do not be afraid

In company with the ten apostles we today re-live the episode in the Upper Room on the night following Jesus' resurrection. As newly baptized we come before the apostle Paul and place in his hands our baptismal vows. And he instructs us how to "cling to the Easter mystery in our daily lives." He reminds us of the Holy Week of his life, the time when he scourged and



crucified Christ in His Church until the risen Savior appeared to him before the gates of Damascus. At that moment Easter began for him, an Easter that never ended. Such was his Easter experience, and it should be our aim to be similarly transformed.

1. **Divine Office.** As we pray in the silence of night, our whole being, mind, heart, and soul, is thrilled by the vision of the risen Savior. St. Ambrose describes the characteristics of Christ's glorified body and gives some reasons why He retained the marks of His wounds: "The Lord passed through locked doors, not in an incorporeal manner, but with His risen and glorified body. Surely an object that can be touched is physical; what we can feel and hold is truly material. Our bodies too will rise again. For an earthly body is sown, and a spiritualized body will rise from the grave, one far more refined and delicate than that grossly material body which is subject to earthly imperfections.

"How could Christ's body be other than a true body since He visibly carried the scars of His wounds, showed them to His disciples and even permitted others to touch them? These scars He did not wish to remove; for our sake He would take them along to heaven in order to confirm our faith and to ennoble our

spirit of devotion. And He would present them to God, His Father, as the ransom money for our redemption. And His Father placed Him at His right hand because the trophies of our liberation were found in His very body. This glorification of Christ's wounds is ample proof that the martyrs will receive a similar reward in eternity."

The Church expects that we live the Gospel episodes throughout the day. As an aid she gives us two major antiphons, one at sunrise, the other at sunset. "Jesus stood in the midst of His disciples and said to them: Peace be to you, alleluia, alleluia, alleluia" (Ben. Ant.). "See My hands and My feet, that it is I Myself, alleluia, alleluia" (Magn. Ant.).

Christ's Easter greeting, *Pax vobis*, has become a common liturgical salutation.

2. Holy Mass (Aqua sapientiae). One of Rome's largest churches, St. Paul's outside the Walls, serves as today's station. As apostle to the Gentiles, Paul is a patron of the newly baptized. Three weeks ago they received from him the Church's three jewels, the Our Father, the Gospels, and the Creed. Today he takes the neophytes under his protection. Almost every Sunday he will instruct them in the Epistle. Now he is standing at the sacred font and welcomes them, "With the water of baptism Christ has *slaked your thirst*; you must cooperate with Him and He will make you strong; in the coming storms you *may not waver*; in the end He *will exalt you*" (*Intr.*). These are high ideals — are you ready to follow his advice? (Easter's three main objectives, baptism, Eucharist, resurrection, are alluded to in the words: water, strength, exaltation.)

In the *Collect* the Church intercedes for us; she does not want us to limit our appreciation of Easter to a few truths that must be accepted on faith; rather we must live on a new and higher spiritual plane once we have risen with Christ. Next the stational saint addresses us: "Paul arose, and motioning with his hand for silence, began to speak." He tells us of Christ hanging upon the Cross, he brings Good Friday and Holy Saturday before our

eyes, but he does not conclude without giving the blessed climax, "God raised Him from the dead on the third day; and He was seen during many days by those who had come up with Him from Galilee to Jerusalem; and they are now witnesses for Him to the people."

One of these appearances is now recounted in the *Gospel*, "Jesus stood in the midst of His disciples and said: Peace be to you" (actually we are the ones whom Christ is addressing in the Gospel). We imagine ourselves with the disciples in the Upper Room. Jesus is present and allows us to touch His holy wounds; from His lips we hear the sacred greeting, *Pax*, and then He unravels to us the true meaning of the Scriptures.

What should we bring to the apostle's grave as a gift? The *Offertory* antiphon helps us to decide. A soul thoroughly moved by the Easter mystery, a soul naked on the ground before the majesty of God is our oblation: "The Lord thundered from the heavens, the Most High sent forth His voice and fountains of water appeared." Redemption's streams of grace are now flooding the world. At them, as they flow from the altar during the sacrificial banquet, we may quench our thirst.

The *Secret* begins exactly as in the last three Mass formularies; it continues, however, with the petition that the holy Sacrifice may bring us to Easter in heaven. With a text from St. Paul Mother Church accompanies us to the Communion table. To the neophytes it is not a new message, for they heard it during the sacred night of Easter when the apostle admonished them: "If you are risen with Christ, seek the things that are above. . . ." As the fruit of the Sacrifice we ask that this "blessed experience of the Easter mystery may continue without ceasing in our souls."

3. Living the Easter Mystery. Today's entire liturgy is permeated with the objective of putting into daily practice Easter's central truths. At the very beginning of Mass the Introit gives the blueprint of Christian life: water — food — crown; purification — strength — reward; or in theological terms: baptism — Eucharist — parousia.

The Collect continues the theme by imploring that all, the newly baptized as well as the faithful, cherish in daily life the mystery into which all have been initiated. By "sacrament" or "mystery" the liturgy does not refer to baptism or the Eucharist or to any other sacrament in the usual present-day usage of the words; rather, the words denote the whole complex of Easter's graces, God's presence in our midst lavishly bestowing the fullness of heavenly life and light. While praying the Collect think of the great apostle Paul. At the gates of Damascus he received the graces of Easter and thereafter preserved them inviolate until the very end. What astonishes us most is that after twenty and more years he was still in his first fervor. Whenever he refers to his conversion in his letters, it is always with deepest emotion, e.g., 1 Cor. 15:9. But we, as we grow older, become increasingly lax and tepid. At this very moment there is grave danger that our Easter conversion will be entirely forgotten in the coming weeks.

Most appropriately do we petition for the grace of perseverance and steadfastness in the Communion and Postcommunion, for these two virtues are fruits of the sacrament of the holy Eucharist. What is Paul's Easter message to us in his great Easter maxim, "If you are risen with Christ . . .," which we hear so often during these weeks, if not that we must transfer into everyday action the mystery of Easter eve? "The things that are above" must become the object of our thoughts and desires; will and intellect may not be occupied with the material and earthly, but with the supernatural and divine. Heavenly desires and heavenly thoughts must fill our minds. This is very beautifully expressed in the Postcommunion: "May the Easter mystery continue without ceasing in our souls (*continua perseveret*)."

Holy Church is using every possible means to make us realize that Easter is not simply a passing beam of light or a ripple on the sea of grace; rather it is a spiritual experience of transcending importance, one through which we are raised up to God and one which has the power to keep us there permanently.

EASTER WEDNESDAY

Station at St. Lawrence

A Christian walks on earth but lives in heaven

With a small group of seven disciples we meet the Lord on the shores of Genesareth and with Him partake of a meal that is not without rich symbolic import. Today's manifestation of our risen Savior is the third appearance in the liturgical sequence (cf. Gospels on Monday and Tuesday). The neophytes present themselves to their patron, the great warrior and hero, Lawrence, who had been at their side encouraging and comforting them during the struggles of Lent. For on Septuagesima we entered the arena under his banner; when the Lenten battle was at its height we sought his aid, and today we honor him as one who embodies the Easter triumph and who will inspire us to carry the palm of Easter victory through the obstacles of daily life. How did Lawrence keep Easter? His real Easter was the day on which he was martyred, the day when he saw the Lord from the gridiron of fire.

1. **Divine Office.** First a few points on Christ's appearance as recounted in the Gospel. As you scrutinize the text, notice how the apostles labored the whole night without results — they caught nothing. Disheartened they rowed toward the shore as morning dawned. On the banks Christ was standing. Who was the first to recognize Him? John, the disciple whom Jesus loved. How impetuously Peter acted! Then the meal, so richly symbolic! But the disciples no longer are on such intimate and familiar terms with Jesus as at the Last Supper.

Something similar happens in the liturgy; what a difference between Jesus in the Gospels and the Christ of liturgical worship. In the one He is human and appealingly close; we regard Him as a fellow man, we walk in His footsteps. But in the liturgy we behold Christ standing against the awesome background of eter-

nity, glorified at the right hand of the Father. Read today's pericope in context in the Fourth Gospel. After that memorable meal Jesus asked Peter three times, "Do you love Me?," and then conferred the primacy upon him.

In the second nocturn St. Gregory the Great explains the Gospel allegorically. "One may ask, why did the Lord after His resurrection stand on the shore while the disciples were tiring themselves on the sea, if before His resurrection He walked upon the waves in the sight of His disciples. This problem too will swiftly be solved if we look for the reason underneath. Now what does the sea represent other than the present age that expends itself in a turmoil of quarrels on the surging billows of transitory life? But the solid shore — is that not a figure of the land of eternal rest? Because the disciples were still being tossed about by the billows of this mortal life, they were tiring themselves on the sea. But because our Redeemer had already raised Himself up out of the corruptibility of the flesh, He stood on the shore after His resurrection."

The day's leading antiphons do not let us forget Christ's appearance, "Cast the net to the right of the boat and you will make a catch, alleluia" (Ben. Ant.). "Jesus said to His disciples: Bring here some of the fishes that you caught just now. Simon Peter went aboard and hauled the net onto the land full of large fishes, alleluia" (Magn. Ant.).

2. **Holy Mass (Venite).** The station church today is the fa-

mous basilica of St. Lawrence outside the Walls. Our Savior Himself is standing at the door, and as we enter it seems as if we were passing through the very gates of heaven and heard the loving invitation: "Come, blessed of My Father, receive the kingdom. . . ." (These words were directed primarily to the neophytes; the "kingdom" is the Church, a true celestial kingdom, heaven's courtyard.) Psalm 95, the Easter canticle, gives the response of the newly baptized as they entered the edifice, "Sing to the Lord a new song!" Few compositions would have been more appropriate on the lips of the Church's youngest children. Notice too how often this psalm is associated with St. Lawrence (e.g., Thursday after the first Sunday of Lent; Aug. 10).

The *Oration* tells us that earthly feasts are so many oases on our way to celestial joys. In the *Epistle* Peter, the first Pope (Lawrence was a deacon of the Roman Church), preaches on the topic of Christ's resurrection. There is reason for the opening sentence, "Peter opened his mouth and spoke" (it is the stational saint who is addressing us). Peter does not mince words as he tells the Jews: "The author of life you killed, whom God raised up from the dead; whereof we are witnesses" (*nos testes sumus* — in Greek, *martyres*, a word that Lawrence made his very own!).

At the *Gospel* our risen Savior appears for the "third" time in our midst (Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday — no appearance was mentioned on Sunday). A sacred cloud of incense envelops the scene. It is a magnificent symbol of the holy Sacrifice! For we too are sailing through the sea of this world during the night of life; on the shores of eternity Jesus is standing and calling to us.

Whose part do we play? John's? Peter's? or the other disciples'? Like John, persons in the bloom of youth recognize the Lord immediately (Blessed are the pure of heart, for they shall see God); individuals of an impetuous, fiery disposition like Peter hasten through the waves of suffering and martyrdom to Christ (Lawrence); others continuing on peacefully in their fishing boats finally come safely to shore. There all partake of the

meal so highly symbolic in nature — the Eucharist (fish and bread). "When they had landed, they saw a fire ready, and a fish laid upon it, and bread" — a figure of the martyrdom of today's stational saint on the fiery gridiron! During the holy Sacrifice Christ tarries in our midst and extends to us the fish and bread of the Eucharist.

The *Offertory* gives the Church's commentary on the bread mentioned in the Gospel: "He gave them Bread from heaven, and men ate the Bread of angels." By this Bread "the Church is fed and nourished in a most marvelous manner" (*Secr.*). For the *Communion* the Church cites a principle from St. Paul that she cherishes very highly: The risen Redeemer dies now no more. As a fruit of this Sacrifice may we be transformed "into a new creation" (*Postc.*).

3. A Christian Walks on Earth but Lives in Heaven. Recall Paul's words to the Philippians, "Our citizenship is in heaven" (Phil. 3:20). The word used in the original Greek meant, according to the idiom of the time, a colony that modelled its system upon that of the city responsible for its foundation. The implications, then, would be: "Our original and true home is in heaven; here on earth we are a colony of heaven's citizens" (Dibelius).

By nature we belong to heaven, it is our bodies that keep us on earth. Especially in Easter time does the Church seek to impress this truth upon our minds because the fifty days preceding Pentecost bring liturgical life to its crest and represent our closest approach to the beatitude of heaven. During these fifty days we should feel as if we were living in heaven. The dominating theme in today's Mass text can easily be detected: A Christian walks on earth but lives in heaven. At the very outset Christ is present to receive and invite us into the kingdom of heaven. "Come, blessed of My Father, receive the kingdom that was prepared for you from the foundation of the world!" He is inviting the newly baptized and those baptized long ago into heaven's colony, the Church.

According to the Collect we attain everlasting happiness

through the observance of the annual feasts — this holds for all feasts, but for Easter in a preeminent way. In the colony the customs and laws of the homeland are observed and cherished. Our earthly liturgy is an imitation of that in heaven. As often, then, as we come to Church we should feel ourselves in heaven. It would not be difficult to find this "colony exegesis" in the Gospel by way of allegory. The apostles rowing in their little boat represent earthly life, while Christ is standing on the shores of eternity. He is calling to us, inviting us to row toward our heavenly homeland. Through the Eucharist, the meal symbolized by the fish and bread, we are enabled to unite ourselves with Him.

The Offertory verse calls the Eucharist the Bread from heaven, the Bread of angels. While still in this earthly colony we are nourished with food from our homeland! Already now we may share in the divine prerogatives enjoyed by all the citizens of heaven. Over us earth has no rights, for we are like Christ who after His resurrection cannot die again. See how richly we are supplied with material from the Mass formulary for meditation on the theme: A Christian Walks on Earth but Lives in Heaven.

EASTER THURSDAY

Station at the Twelve Apostles

Jesus said: Mary!
Turning, she said to Him, Master!

We are privileged today to be with Mary Magdalen as Jesus appears to her. It is a meeting characterized by tenderness, sympathy, and deep devotion. On the first four days of Easter week we (and the neophytes) visited the four most illustrious members of God's Church at Rome: Mary, Peter, Paul, Lawrence.

Today we meet the Twelve Apostles, those twelve venerable patriarchs of our holy faith.

1. Divine Office. Frequently during today's Office we stop and reflect upon the appearance of Jesus to Mary Magdalen near the tomb on Easter morning. Numerous passages are as beautiful as the following responsory:

> Rejoice with me, all you who love the Lord, for He whom I was seeking has appeared to me.
> While I was weeping at the tomb, I saw the Lord, alleluia, alleluia.
> The disciples left, but I remained. I burned with longing for Him, inflamed with the fire of love.
> While I was weeping at the tomb, I saw the Lord, alleluia, alleluia.

The day's two principal antiphons likewise refer to Mary Magdalen: "Mary stood near the tomb, weeping. Presently she saw two angels sitting there in white, and also the linen that had been about the head of Jesus, alleluia" (Ben. Ant.). "They have taken away my Lord, and I know not where they have laid Him. If you have removed Him, tell me, alleluia; and I will take Him away, alleluia" (Magn. Ant.).

At Matins St. Gregory the Great explains the Gospel. "Throughout the city Mary Magdalen had been known as the sinner. However, it was her love of Truth (Christ) that prompted her to wash away the stains of sin with tears. Thereby she fulfilled the word of Truth: Her sins, many as they are, shall be forgiven her, because she has loved much (Luke 7:47). She who previously was cold because of an evil life is all afire now through love. When she came to the grave and did not find the Lord's body, she imagined that it had been taken away, and went to tell the disciples.

"They came, looked, and believed that it actually had happened as Magdalen told them. Concerning the disciples the Gospel account immediately continues: The disciples, therefore, went away again to their home (John 20:10). But Mary remained

standing at the tomb, weeping. At this point we must stop and reflect upon the ardent love in the heart of this woman who would not leave the Lord's grave even after His own disciples had gone away. She continued seeking Him whom she did not find; in tears she kept searching; and afire with love, she yearned for Him whom she believed had been removed. Thus it happened that she alone saw Him, she who had remained behind to seek Him, simply because a truly good act involves the virtue of perseverance. For the lips of Truth Itself have said: He who perseveres to the end, he shall be saved.

"Still weeping, Mary stooped down to look into the tomb. Surely, she had seen the tomb empty; already she had announced to the disciples that the Lord had been taken away. Why, then, did she stoop over again to see the condition of the grave? A soul that loves is never satisfied with a single glance, the power of love urges it to continue seeking. Mary had already sought and found nothing. But she persevered, and therefore found the object of her love. While she was seeking, her longing grew stronger and stronger until at highest pitch it was allayed in the embrace of Him whom she was seeking."

Thursday of Easter Week is dedicated to Mary Magdalen. It is the fourth time that we commemorate an appearance of the risen Savior. Today I should be a Magdalen-soul, happy if the Lord should call to me. He does indeed call — He called me at baptism, and daily since.

At times it is with a stern voice admonishing me, at times with words of love. During Lent He spoke like a father appealing to his child to return home; now at Easter His voice resembles that of a bridegroom speaking to his bride — sweetly, softly as when He spoke to the Magdalen. In every holy Mass the Good Shepherd calls His sheep by name, "I know Mine and Mine know Me."

2. Holy Mass (Victricem). The basilica dedicated to the Twelve Apostles is no strange place for us. Every Ember Friday we pilgrimage to it to atone for and expiate the sins of the past quarter year. In

The design. The station (Twelve Apostles) and the unity effected among peoples by baptism are indicated by the twelve stones and Cornerstone, Christ (Allel. verse). Beneath, Philip with the Ethiopian, and water for baptism. Above them hovers the Holy Spirit. Parallel to the Epistle on Philip as God's messenger to the Ethiopian is the Gospel with Magdalen as the messenger of Easter's glad tidings to the apostles (top).

God has raised up His Son, a blessing unto you

today's Mass formulary there are many references to the station church. The relics of the two apostles, Philip and James rest here, a fact that may have occasioned the choice of the Epistle on Philip the Deacon (a superficial similarity of names is often sufficient in the liturgy; identity of person is not required).

The day's station is the only church at Rome built in the Greek style; thus it serves as a symbol of the oneness of the various peoples in Christ through baptism. In this context we understand the Collect which speaks of unifying the nations through holy baptism. Nor does the Gospel lack special ties with the stational church, for Mary Magdalen, the central figure in the pericope, seems to have been honored there on certain days (see Ember Friday in September).

From whose lips does today's *Introit* come? As given in the Book of Wisdom the passage describes how the Israelites praised the victorious hand of God that led them safely through the Red Sea. In liturgical symbolism this deliverance represents Easter baptism. Accordingly, the Introit would be a prayer by the neophytes — all the baptized — who have just celebrated Easter. Their mouths and tongues were opened in the baptismal ceremony (*aperitio aurium*). However, the Introit could also be the song of the apostles praising God for the graces of Easter and baptism.

The *Collect* is richly theological, it begs for unity in faith and brotherly harmony in every thought and deed. The Readings bring to our attention two New Testament episodes: first, the baptism of the minister of finance from Ethiopia, then the apparition of the risen Savior to Mary Magdalen. The former directs its message to the neophytes, the latter, to the faithful. Baptism and resurrection are the two leading themes. There is an unusual personal air about the Gospel today. Eagerly we take our part in the fourth appearance, knowing that the sacrificial banquet will transform the historical account into a present reality.

In the *Offertory* we have the opportunity to praise God for having brought us into the land of milk and honey; and while

proceeding to the altar to communicate, the Church calls us (neophytes) "the Chosen People whom God has called out of the darkness into His marvellous light." The *Secret* reminds us that baptism includes the profession of our faith and moral transformation. The *Postcommunion* describes the work of redemption as "a sacred commercial transaction." Note how these texts accentuate the unique dignity of Christian baptism!

3. Apostles of Easter's Grace. These few words would give the gist of today's Mass text in the form of a slogan for action. Let us begin with the Lessons. Here we meet two model apostles. In the Epistle a man brings the grace of Easter to a pagan, in the Gospel a woman is sent by the risen Savior as a herald to His disciples. With a pagan in search of God, Philip discussed the Scriptures, and a baptism resulted. To the doubting disciples Mary Magdalen brought the message that Christ had risen. All of us likewise have had opportunities to instruct others in the glories of baptism and of faith in Christ's resurrection by word of mouth, by promoting Bible study, through the liturgy, and above all through the silent sermon of a life of true Christian charity.

It is our duty to proclaim among men "God's victorious hand" (Intr.). For this apostolate eloquence is not necessary, neither is advanced education, for God can make "the dumb speak and children eloquent." Accept the challenge thrown out to you in the Communion and publish God's marvellous deeds. Now at Eastertime these marvels consist in our spiritual rebirth and enlightenment (recall pertinent passages from the *Exultet*!). In your apostolate emphasize acts of virtue, but do not neglect the spoken and written word. You will be an excellent *apostle and preacher* of the Easter mystery if you *live* the Easter mystery.

EASTER FRIDAY

Station at St. Mary of the Martyrs

I am with you all days, even unto the consummation of the world

It seems like a farewell ceremony as we gather together with the apostles to meet Christ on a hillside in Galilee. At Rome the neophytes pilgrimage to the Queen of Martyrs and a week after the crucifixion behold the Cross in the brightness of Easter glory.

1. **Divine Office.** The Gospel narrative holds us spellbound, particularly the awe-inspiring words which Jesus addresses to us, "All power is given to Me in heaven and on earth. . . ." At Matins St. Jerome adds a few words of explanation: "All power is given to Him who shortly before was crucified, who lay dead in the grave, who then rose again. In heaven and on earth all power is given to Him. Previously He had reigned in heaven, now He also reigns through faith in the hearts of His redeemed upon earth. Therefore, go out and teach all peoples, baptize them in the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost.

"First, the apostles instruct the nations, then they immerse those who have been instructed in the saving waters. For a body cannot possibly be affected by the mystery of baptism if the soul has not already accepted the truths of faith. They are baptized in the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost; as there is unity in the Godhead (since the term 'Trinity' denotes the one God), so there is oneness in the graces imparted. Teach them to observe all that I have commanded you. An excellent arrangement! First He commands the apostles to teach all nations, then to cleanse those who believe with the waters of the sacrament of faith. And after imparting faith and administering baptism, they are to instruct them in the precepts to be observed.

"And lest we should imagine that these precepts are few in number and of small importance, our blessed Savior adds: All that I have commanded you. Every one, therefore, who believes and who has been baptized in the Name of the Blessed Trinity must obey all of God's commandments. Behold, I am with you all days, even unto the consummation of the world. Now when Christ promises to be with His followers until the end of the world, He implies that they will always be victorious and that He Himself will never abandon them."

The whole day is devoted to reflection on Christ's appearance on the mountain in Galilee. Attention is focused on this episode by the antiphons at the beginning and at the end of the day: "All power is given to Me in heaven and on earth, alleluia (Ben. Ant.). "All power is given to Me in heaven and on earth, alleluia" (Magn. Ant.).

2. Holy Mass (Eduxit). A fine sense of discrimination is shown by the Church in her choice of stations during Easter week. Today the liturgy is performed at "St. Mary of the Mar-

In the picture we see the day's station patron, St. Mary of the Martyrs. Good Friday's octave day! But now the Cross stands high in splendor, radiant in the glorious light of Easter; and the Mother of Sorrows is surrounded by a shining host of martyrs. Beset by six swords, the seventh pierced her heart — the passion! Since it is not traditional to picture the Mother of God with a palm, two martyrs extend their palms toward her.

tyrs" (this basilica is the cradle of the feast of All Saints, a feast celebrated today in the Eastern Church).

Today, Friday, our thoughts spontaneously revert to Good Friday, and to the Friday now two weeks past, Seven Sorrows. Fourteen days ago the Church sang the *Stabat Mater;* eight days ago she mourned, "I am a worm and no man." Now she raises her eyes again to the Cross and to the Sorrowful Mother, but she sees both Cross and Mary in the light and glory of the resurrection. A beautiful and inspiring sequence, indeed! After a two week interval during which Mary of the Seven Sorrows stood beside the Cross, she appears radiant with Easter glory, bearing the palm of victory and surrounded by "the shining host of martyrs." But what message does the liturgy have today for the white-robed neophytes as they approach the "Queen of Martyrs" and her train, wearing robes washed white in the blood of her Son? Christian life means struggle, fears, suffering. A Christian must always be ready to reach for the palm of martyrdom. And the conflict does not stop at Easter.

One other lesson is impressed strongly upon their docile minds: on Friday, on this very day, the blood-stained Cross became the *crux gemmata,* the glorified Cross. We must begin to see life's crosses in the context of Easter glory. We must join "the shining host of martyrs" of which Mary is the leader.

Without mentioning the neophytes directly by name, the Church thinks of them as she prays the *Introit.* The figure of Israel crossing the Red Sea represents our Easter experience. In the psalm the Church speaks as an admonishing mother: the neophytes should obey God's commandments. The *Collect* calls the Easter mystery "a covenant for the reconciliation of mankind." This work must be ascribed to God. Man's part is to imitate God, viz., having risen from spiritual death he should remain alive unto God.

In the *Epistle* the prince of the apostles speaks to us about Christ's death on the Cross, through which "He brought us to God." A considerable portion of the address is devoted to Christ's descent into limbo, an article of the Creed. The *Alleluia* verse

recalls the crucifixion scene, our King with the Cross for His throne. In the *Gospel* the risen Savior endows the Church with divine power and promises her His constant presence.

The *Offertory* chant exhorts the neophytes to make their baptism a "memorial and a solemn feast" for the rest of their lives. In the early Church a special feast, *Pascha Annotinum*, commemorated the anniversary of their baptism. The *Secret* makes two points, a) the holy Sacrifice expiates the sins of the neophytes; b) it likewise hastens the bestowal of heavenly graces. Again during the *Communion* procession we hear Christ's awe-inspiring farewell. He whose power is universe-embracing commands us to missionize the nations. *Postcommunion*: May the newly baptized (including ourselves) who now have been renewed by the sacred mysteries be freed of all guilt.

3. Cross and Resurrection. If we meditate upon the prayers of today's holy Mass, we will quickly see how the pendulum swings from resurrection and baptism on the one side to sin and the Cross on the other.

a) Sin. Isn't it strange to find sin mentioned during the week when our hearts and minds are dwelling in heaven? This is an entirely new strain in the Easter liturgy; until now no mention of sin occurred, but today all three Orations refer to it. We may never forget that we are sinners; only through a gruelling struggle against sin can we safeguard our Easter triumph. During Eastertide too holy Mass continues to be a sacrifice of expiation for sin.

b) The Cross. No one can take it amiss that the Church directs her gaze to the Cross today, "Christ died once for our sins . . . that He might bring us to God. . . . He was put to death in the flesh. . . ." (Epist.). With these words the whole panorama of Good Friday passes before our eyes! The Church expresses her reflections in the Alleluia verse, "Herald this message among the Gentiles: God is reigning on the Cross!" During the Canon we erect this Cross while our thoughts dwell upon the *beata passio*. It is a stirring spiritual experience to meditate upon the Cross resplendent with the light of Easter.

c) At the opposite end of the pendulum's arc we have the two topics of resurrection and baptism. Through song and prayer the Church is instructing the newly baptized as they gather around the altar in their baptismal garments. For a backdrop the Introit gives the Exodus from Egypt; through the waters of baptism we escaped from the slavery of Egypt; the enemy has been overwhelmed and there now begins the forty-year journey through the desert before we may enter the Promised Land of heaven. Baptism means deliverance from the deluge in the ark of the Church (Epist.), baptism means that Christ's Easter glory is now beaming upon our souls (Grad.). The Gospel says: We are baptized in the Name of the Blessed Trinity, i.e., we belong to the Blessed Trinity. If we could only comprehend what it means to be baptized in the Name of the Father . . . to be enveloped by the Triune God! The yearly anniversary of your baptism should be your greatest feast day (Off.). See how many different aspects of holy baptism Mother Church is pointing out to us today! She is making every effort to impress upon us the dignity and importance of Christian baptism.

d) The resurrection. There is a wealth of good, practical points in today's short Gospel. It tells of Christ's appearance to the Eleven on a hill in Galilee, a scene that seems like a final, military review of His faithful followers. What a tremendous statement, "All power is given to Me. . . ." Then the command to baptize, the injunction to missionize. His concluding words, "I am with you all days . . .," ring down through the ages. He is with us in the Church — and now in holy Mass. In the liturgical sequence today's is Jesus' fifth appearance; now in the holy Sacrifice He is standing before us on the mystical mount of the altar. He directs to me His farewell words. Master, You have indeed confided Your power to the Church, You have sent Your apostles to teach me, to baptize me, and You have promised to be with me all days!

Many and profound are the truths that the liturgy puts at our disposal today.

EASTER SATURDAY

Station at St. John Lateran

All you who have been baptized in Christ have put on Christ

Today the newly baptized assembled for the last time wearing their baptismal garments. At the appointed time they laid these robes aside and put on their usual clothing. Then they were officially declared clean and therewith accounted as full-fledged members of the Christian community. Now for the first time were they allowed to bring their gifts formally to the altar in the Offertory procession; on previous days this task was performed by their sponsors.

1. **Laying Aside the Baptismal Garments.** Saturday in Easter week is devoted entirely to the baptismal robe and its symbolism. Even the Gospel has bearing on the subject. Recall that at baptism you received two signs of your priestly office, a white gar-

The design illustrates the day's liturgy. Upon the tomb are the linens, signs of Christ's resurrection; they also remind us of the baptismal robes put aside today by the neophytes, signs of their spiritual resurrection. Participants in the solemn celebration are Peter (Epist.), Paul (Comm.), John the Baptist (station), and John the Evangelist (Gosp.); the two Johns carry a baptismal robe and a lamp. The Lamb with palm and milk pitcher represents the holy Eucharist, means by which the neophytes "put on Christ" (Comm.). The Lamb stands on the Cornerstone referred to in the Epistle (which also mentions the spiritual milk).

ment and a burning lamp. And the minister of the sacrament admonished you to retain both throughout life: "Receive this white garment, and see that you wear it without stain to the judgment seat of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you may enjoy life everlasting. . . . Receive this burning light and safeguard your baptism by a blameless life; keep God's commandments so that when our Lord comes to the marriage feast you may be worthy to greet Him with all the saints in the heavenly court and live forever and ever." When the neophyte returned his white garment to the Church's wardrobe, he was quite conscious of its deeper implications; he vividly realized that he was obliged to preserve the soul's white garment, the garment of grace, immaculate in order to receive the stole of glory from the eternal Judge.

2. **Divine Office.** St. Gregory the Great comments on the Gospel in an allegorical fashion: "The portion of the holy Gospel that you have just heard, brethren, is self-evident from the historical viewpoint. But we must inquire briefly into its deeper mysteries. While it was yet dark Mary Magdalen came to the sepulcher. Historically speaking, the hour is indicated, but according to the text's mystical implications the understanding of the seeker is referred to. For in the sepulcher Mary was seeking the Author of all things, whose lifeless body she had seen; and because she did not find Him, she believed that He had been stolen away. Therefore it was still dark when she came to the tomb.

"She ran swiftly and told the disciples. Those among them who loved more than the others ran faster than the rest, namely Peter and John. Together the two ran to the tomb, but John outran Peter. Although John came first to the tomb, he did not dare to enter. Then Peter came, and entered. Now what, brethren, what does this running signify? Are we to believe that so detailed a description is lacking in mystery? Not at all. John would never have described how he had arrived first at the tomb but did not enter had he not sensed some mystery in his action.

"Now could John signify anything else except the synagogue? And could Peter signify anything but the Church? Do not think it strange that the younger person represents the synagogue and the older the Church. For although the synagogue preceded the Gentile Church in having a liturgy acceptable to God, nevertheless in the order of nature a multitude of Gentile nations preceded the synagogue. To this St. Paul is witness: It is not the spiritual that comes first, but the physical (1 Cor. 15:46). Peter then, the elder of the two, represents the Church of the Gentiles while John, the younger, signifies the synagogue of the Jews.

"Together they ran to the tomb. For from the very beginning and down through history, Gentile and Jew kept pace with each other on a common road although their dispositions were utterly different. The synagogue arrived first at the sepulcher but did not enter. Why? The Jews indeed had received the precepts of the Law, they had heard the prophecies concerning the incarnation and Christ's passion; but in Him who died they refused to believe."

3. **Holy Mass (Eduxit).** Today's station is at St. John Lateran, the mother church of Christendom. Eight days ago the Easter vigil liturgy took place in this basilica. During the week the neophytes gathered at various sanctuaries; today they return a final time to the place of baptism. For this solemn close to the Church's official initiation rites, both St. John the Baptist and St. John the Evangelist, the stational patrons, are present; likewise Peter, Paul, and Mary Magdalen. In the course of the service the newly baptized take off their white robes and place them in the church's wardrobe to remain there in token of their baptismal pledges and as testimony against anyone who should prove unfaithful (*Sabbatum in albis depositis*, the Saturday on which the white robes are laid away).

The Mass too is concerned with the symbolism of the baptismal garment. Consoling words are addressed to the neophytes as the moment comes to lay aside their robe of honor — in their hearts they should retain it immaculate forever.

a) Only the garment of the old man with his sins and imperfections need be cast aside (here is the reason for choosing an Epistle which begins: "Lay aside therefore all malice, and all deceit. . . .").

b) Christ's clothing too was taken away on Calvary, and after His resurrection the linens remained on the bench in the tomb. For Peter and John (the Church) these linens were proofs of Christ's resurrection; similarly the baptismal robes left behind in in the church give evidence of the spiritual resurrection of those baptized.

c) In baptism they have put on the new man: "Put on therefore, as God's chosen ones, holy and beloved, a heart of mercy, kindness, humility, meekness, patience" (Col. 3:12). Yes, even more, in baptism they have put on Christ Himself: "For all you who have been baptized into Christ, have put on Christ" (Gal. 3:27). Him they may never put off. Him they must ever "put on anew" in the holy Eucharist.

What is more intimately associated with a person than his clothing? The devotees of the pagan mystery cults vested themselves with the clothing of a god (e.g., in costumes resembling a fish) and believed that thereby they had identified themselves with the god in question. What they vainly imagined is a reality for us Christians. For baptism incorporates us into Christ, makes us members of His Body. How appropriate, therefore, are Paul's words: "All you who have been baptized into Christ, have put on Christ" *(Comm.)*.

Much in today's liturgy has the character of a farewell discourse by Mother Church to the newly baptized. In summary she seems to say, "Remember that the Lord has led you out of Egypt. As His chosen ones you must continue the journey to the Promised Land of heaven (*Intr.*). In St. Peter's striking metaphor: You are living stones — therefore allow the Holy Spirit to fashion you into that temple of God of which the cornerstone is Christ (*Epist.*). You have become priests, able to offer the Sacrifice of holy Mass (at today's Mass the neophytes presented their gifts at the altar for the first time). You are a

chosen generation, a royal priesthood; by your lives you should proclaim the perfections of Him who has called you out of darkness into His marvellous light."

Now we have arrived at the end of the Easter solemnity. May it symbolize heaven's eternal Easter and be the means whereby we may arrive there (*Coll., Secr.*). From the depths of our hearts we are grateful for the Easter graces just received (*Intr.*), and hope that its joy will ever remain in our hearts. Never will we hinder today's great Alleluia from echoing and re-echoing in our souls. Solemnly the Church imparts her farewell blessing, "We bless you from the house of God" (*Off.*). *Ite, missa est, alleluia, alleluia — Deo gratias, alleluia, alleluia.*

THE FIRST WEEK AFTER EASTER

Special rubrics govern Mass and Office during Easter Week (e.g., the Gradual is found at Mass, Matins have but one nocturn, hymns and other embellishing accidentals are omitted). The rubrics peculiar to Eastertide begin with Low Sunday. The Easter season covers the period from Easter to the Saturday after Pentecost.

Our best efforts must be directed toward developing a keen appreciation of the symbolism underlying the Easter season. The whole period is but one great feast. In the Church's calendar major feasts are celebrated with an octave. Easter, however, is the greatest of Christian feasts, the Feast of feasts. Accordingly the Church celebrates Easter not simply during one octave but during seven octaves and a day — a "jubilee octave" of fifty days.

We have seen that the time before Easter has been associated with the seventy years Israel remained in Babylon — hence the name Septuagesima. The Easter season lasts fifty days. The number fifty symbolizes unbounded joy and points to the beati-

tude of heaven. If then we felt ourselves as captives in Babylon forbidden to sing Alleluia during Lent, now during Easter time we should feel as if we were in heaven where the Alleluia, heaven's song, is sung continually.

For this reason too Alleluia occurs repeatedly in the Mass text; it is Easter's song *par excellence*, the song the angels sing.

The Church has a penchant to see Easter as the fulfillment of Israel's entry into the Promised Land, "the land flowing with milk and honey." During this period we should be oblivious of living upon earth as we experience a foretaste of heaven. We should keep our true greatness vividly before our eyes, viz., we are chosen children in the service of a kind and merciful Father — and in our hearts we carry heaven.

During Eastertide the Church's worship is characterized by certain variations that are well known to liturgically-minded Christians. For the moment the following survey will suffice.

1. From ancient times it has been customary to stand rather than kneel while praying. For standing points to Christ's resurrection.

2. One or two alleluias are added to the variable chants in Mass and Office. Glancing through tomorrow's Mass we find alleluias in the Introit, after the Epistle, and with the Offertory

The design. With Gregorian notation we have the antiphon for the third nocturn of Matins on Easter: "Alleluia, do not weep, Mary, alleluia; the Lord is risen, alleluia, alleluia!"

and Communion. Give these little, lovely songs the attention they deserve.

3. The Epistle is not followed by a Gradual, but by a somewhat lengthier Alleluia verse. The Gradual is omitted because by nature it seems to be rather somber and penitential. A second versicle is added to the Alleluia chant.

White, the color denoting joy and happiness, is worn for all Proper of the Season Masses. The *Gloria in excelsis*, omitted during Lent, is now sung both on Sundays and weekdays.

Regular Scripture Readings again form part of the Office. During Easter time these Readings are restricted to the New Testament according to an old, established principle: *Omnia nova*, Let all things be new at Easter! During the first two weeks the Acts of the Apostles, the inspiring story of the apostolic Church, is read.

LOW SUNDAY

Station at St. Pancratius

These are the firstborn lambs
who brought the tidings, alleluia, alleluia.
Now they have come to the font,
They are filled with glory, alleluia, alleluia.
They stand in the presence of the Lamb,
dressed in white robes,
holding palm branches in their hands.
They are filled with glory, alleluia, alleluia.

1. Liturgically, this day is known as *Dominica in albis*, the Sunday in white. At baptism, as noted above, the neophytes were given a white robe and a burning lamp. With these they left

the baptistry and marched to the church where they offered their first holy Mass. The white garments symbolized baptismal innocence and grace. What remains of this venerable, ancient rite? At the baptism of an infant the priest places a white linen upon the child while saying: "Receive this white garment and see that you wear it without stain to the judgment seat of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you may enjoy life everlasting." It certainly may be recommended, then, that sponsors provide a white dress for

The design. In the center is pictured the mysterium described by the Gospel and Communion verse: "Bring here your hand . . . My Lord and my God . . . Blessed are they who have not seen, and yet have believed" (Eucharist, faith). In the background is the "locked door"; upon the banner, the Savior's Easter Greeting. At the bottom the Epistle is visualized: "The Spirit (tongue of fire), the water (with little fish), and the blood (chalice); and these three are one." These are the three Easter sacraments, viz., baptism, confirmation, and Eucharist. The top section may be associated with various texts, e.g., the Epistle: "There are three that bear witness in heaven: the Father (hand), the Word (Lamb), and the Holy Spirit (dove)." The Lamb is standing on an altar (Mass) and carries a milk pitcher (catacomb symbol of the Eucharist). On each end of the altar is an Orante figure — neophytes or first communicants.

their godchild; after baptism it should be kept for the child as a remembrance of the greatest day in its life.

Dressed in white, the neophytes assisted at their first Mass and received their first holy Communion. After the service they did not divest themselves of their baptismal apparel but wore it during the whole ensuing week. They were guests of honor in the parish. Each morning they came to Mass in their white robes, and in the afternoon they returned as a group for a service at the baptismal font. Their presence was a living sermon reminding all that as Christians they had risen with Christ to a new life on Easter. On the Saturday after Easter they came to the church of their baptism for the last time. Here they took off their white garments and placed them in the church's wardrobe where they remained as a memorial of their baptism and of the vows they had made.

On the following day occurred the last stational procession as all the faithful marched to the Church of St. Pancratius. Now for the first time the neophytes appeared in their ordinary clothes, the external sign that at last they were full-fledged members of the Christian community. For the final confirmation of their baptismal vows, a part of today's liturgy, the station church, St. Pancratius, was most appropriate. For St. Pancratius was a youth who at the tender age of fourteen sealed his baptismal promises with his blood. Those who find the observance of vows difficult should look to him for help and inspiration.

2. **Holy Mass (Quasi modo).** Today's formulary is a classical example of how the ancient Church could blend invincible strength with gentleness and tender affection. The faith of martyrs irresistibly strong rings out in harmony with the Church's maternal love for her new-born children. It is Mother Church who greets the neophytes (and all the faithful) as the Mass begins: You have been born in the waters of baptism, but you are as helpless as an infant; now you must grow strong at the breast of Mother Church through the Eucharist. This gives the theme for the formulary (the Introit is the overture to the Mass drama).

Here we have a fundamental principle of liturgical piety: Baptism is preparatory to the holy Eucharist. The baptized faithful must proceed to the Communion table to attain spiritual maturity now during Easter time, in fact, throughout all of life. Psalm 80 in its entirety belongs to the *Introit* (try to acquire the habit of praying the whole psalm when preparing the text beforehand). It is a genuine feast day psalm, one that peals out clear and strong like a mighty bell. The Spirit of God is speaking to us, pointing out our good fortune as Christians and our invincibility, "He will feed them with the best of wheat and with honey from the rock." The holy Eucharist, of course, is meant.

The *Collect* is both highly instructive and beautifully phrased. Easter, indeed, is past but its transforming power should show itself in how we "act and live." A life program in a few words! Having risen spiritually, we must live accordingly.

The *Epistle* has an unusually solemn tone. Faith is its theme, faith powerful enough to conquer the world. The baptized are "born of God"; faith in Christ "overcomes the world." To this faith the Holy Trinity bears witness, viz., the Father at the Messiah's baptism in the Jordan, the Son dying on the Cross, the Holy Ghost in the Church. But the liturgy attaches further significance to these words. It sees in them an allusion to the three sacraments conferred during the Easter vigil — baptism (water), Eucharist (blood), confirmation (Spirit). The phrase, "not in water only, but in the water and in the blood," is particularly important. For by these words the Church wishes to reiterate that baptism of itself is not sufficient to make a mature Christian, but baptism with the Eucharist is.

In dramatic fashion the *Gospel* presents to us one of the more memorable appearances of our blessed Savior after His resurrection. Eight days after Easter (i.e., today) Christ appeared to the disciples with "doubting Thomas" present; together with them we are instructed on "faith that does not see" or understand, and yet believes. The theme of the Mass is again touched upon lightly here — when you find it difficult to believe, put your

finger into Christ's wound, i.e., receive the holy Eucharist. Then you will be strengthened, then you will see Christ; and with Thomas you will say, "My Lord and my God."

One other observation on today's holy Gospel. In the sacred drama of Mass we play the role of Thomas, a fact beautifully shown in the Communion antiphon. As we approach the sacrificial banquet, the risen Savior says, "Bring here your hand (Christians in ancient times received the Eucharistic Bread in their hands); see the places where the nails were."

The Easter joy in our hearts finds expression in the *Secret* as we bring to God the gifts of the "Church exultant" and beg for "perpetual gladness." Note how three different words are used for the same emotion. The *Postcommunion* assures us that the Eucharist was instituted as a pledge of our redemption and begs that it might be a "healing remedy for us both now and in the time to come" (later in the day the Pope used to go in procession to the Church of Sts. Cosmas and Damian).

3. Scripture Reading (Col. 3:1–17). Because of the special character of today's liturgy, the Church does not begin the regular sequence of Scripture lessons but selects a passage proper to the occasion. It is a farewell address of Mother Church to the neophytes and to us; her theme is the same as that found in the Collect, viz., show forth the spirit of Easter in how you act and live.

"Therefore, if you have risen with Christ, seek the things that are above, where Christ is seated at the right hand of God. Mind the things that are above, not the things that are on earth. For you have died and your life is hidden with Christ in God. When Christ, your life, shall appear, then you too will appear with Him in glory. Therefore mortify your members, which are on earth . . . put them all away: anger, wrath, malice, abusive language and foul-mouthed utterances. Do not lie to one another. Strip off the old man with his deeds and put on the new, one that is being renewed unto perfect knowledge 'according to the image of his Creator.' Put on therefore, as God's chosen ones, holy and

beloved, a heart of mercy, kindness, humility, meekness, patience. Bear with one another and forgive one another."

4. Divine Office. Matins today is unusually rich in truths suitable for further meditation. The general subject would be, "What the new Christian believes and does." St. Augustine is the main speaker, "The Easter solemnity comes to an end with today's liturgy. The neophytes therefore lay aside their baptismal robes, fully aware however that the shining whiteness of those garments must be retained forever in their hearts.

"My words are indeed addressed to you all, but since today brings an end to the celebration of the baptismal mysteries, may I speak in particular to you, most tender buds of sanctity, born anew through water and the Holy Ghost — holy sprouts, a host of youths, flowers to our honor and the fruits of our labor, 'my joy and my crown — all you who stand fast in the Lord.' Let me speak to you in the words of the apostle: Behold the night is past; the day is at hand. Cast off the works of darkness and put on the armor of light. Let us walk becomingly as in the day. Put on the Lord Jesus Christ. (These words now addressed to the neophytes had effected St. Augustine's own conversion.) Let your loins be girt about and lamps burning in your hands; and you yourselves like men waiting for their master's return from the wedding. Behold, the days are drawing near of which the Lord says: A little while and you shall not see Me, and again a little while and you shall see Me.

"This is the hour of which He said: You shall be sorrowful but the world shall rejoice. Christ is referring to this life so filled with temptations as we journey on without Him. But, He continues, I will see you again and your heart shall rejoice and your joy no one shall take from you."

The antiphons remind us to think about the Gospel narrative during the entire day. At sunrise: "When it was late that same day, the first day of the week, although the doors where the disciples gathered had been closed, Jesus stood in the midst and said to them: Peace be to you, alleluia." At sunset: "After

eight days, although the doors were closed, the Lord entered and said to them: Peace be to you, alleluia." During Easter time the antiphons for Lauds and Vespers on weekdays too echo the message of the Sunday Gospel or some appropriate reflection on Christ's resurrection.

Note: during the paschal season meditations based on the liturgy of the preceding Sunday will be found on the first days of each week; these may be deferred to a later day in case a feast occurs.

MONDAY AFTER LOW SUNDAY

On weekdays during Paschaltide the antiphons for Lauds and Vespers echo the Sunday Gospel or give some other appropriate reflection on the Easter mystery. Our time and attention will then be directed to the major antiphons at sunrise and sunset, to the Scripture Readings, and to extended meditations upon select topics.

1. **Antiphons.** At sunrise we sing: "When Jesus had risen early on the first day of the week, He appeared first to Mary Magdalen out of whom He had cast seven devils, alleluia." As the sun begins to set Christ consoles us: "Peace be to you, it is I, alleluia. Do not fear, alleluia." These antiphons evidently were not chosen at random; at Lauds we appropriately recall an event which occurred at morning, and at Vespers we listen to words that Christ spoke during an apparition in the evening. Use these antiphons as ejaculations throughout the day.

2. **Scripture Reading (Acts 1:1–26).** Today the Church begins reading the Acts of the Apostles, a book that could not be recommended too highly. In it is found an excellent description

of the life of the ancient Church at Jerusalem, and of Christendom's spread through the efforts of the apostle Paul. For those who desire to form liturgical communities the account has great inspirational value.

In the first twelve chapters the prince of the apostles, Peter, is the central figure as St. Luke, the author of the book, describes the spread of the Church in Jerusalem and Palestine. From chapter 13 to 28, the story revolves around St. Paul, who was called by divine Providence to carry the Gospel to the Greco-Roman world. The author of Acts had accompanied the great apostle on his journeys and was with him when taken to Rome, the center of the political world at the time. The book closes with St. Paul's first period of confinement in Rome (61–63 A.D.).

Our Breviary lessons today cover the first chapter. Christ's ascension into heaven and Matthias' election to the apostolic college are the two major topics. After Jesus had ascended into heaven the disciples returned to Jerusalem from Mt. Olivet and persevered together in prayer. Present were Peter and John, James and Andrew, Philip and Thomas, Bartholomew and Matthew, James the son of Alpheus, Simon the zealot and Judas the brother of James, Mary the Mother of Jesus (this is the last time she is mentioned in the Scriptures) and other holy women.

The prophecies concerning Judas Iscariot had been fulfilled and it became necessary to allot to someone else his place among the Twelve. From those who had been intimately associated with Christ and who had witnessed the resurrection, the two qualifications proposed by St. Peter, Matthias and Joseph who was surnamed Justus, were nominated. After imploring God's assistance in prayer, "they drew lots between them, and the lot fell upon Matthias; and he was numbered with the eleven apostles." The election of Matthias exemplifies how problems involving individuals and the community can readily be resolved in a democratic way without jeopardizing Christian charity.

3. Water, Blood, and Spirit. In certain parishes Low Sunday is First Communion day. There is, however, no foundation

for this custom in the liturgy. In the ancient Church the catechumens received three sacraments during the Easter vigil service, viz., baptism, confirmation, and Communion. For this celebration they wore the white robes that were placed upon them immediately after baptism. These white robes of honor they continued to wear for a week, until the following Saturday. Then on Sunday they came to Mass in their ordinary clothing. This meant that they were now full-fledged members of the Church.

Officially the day may be called *Dominica in albis*, but this title gives no liturgical background for the custom of First Holy Communion. What was proper to this Sunday was the ceremony in which the neophytes publicly pronounced their baptismal vows. This involved two areas of emphasis in their spiritual lives. a) They bound themselves to keep the faith inviolate and to profess it heroically, even at the cost of their life's blood. Recall the words from the Epistle, "This is the victory that overcomes the world — our faith." Only a Christian can make this proud boast. Our faith makes us invincible. But that same boast imposes grave obligations — a life and death struggle with the world, the flesh, and the devil.

b) They promised to fashion their mode of life upon the three paschal sacraments of baptism, confirmation, and the Eucharist.

The *water* of baptism would constantly remind them of having been reborn to a new life.

The *blood* of the Eucharist would be a source of never-failing strength and would unite them to the Cross of Christ.

The *Spirit* of confirmation would make them adult spiritually, would transform them into men who conquered and ruled over the flesh and lower nature.

Water, blood, Spirit, then, would shape their future lives and give testimony to the fact that they were genuine Christians.

You too, my dear Christian reader, have been marked by water, blood, and Spirit Has it been with lasting effect?

TUESDAY AFTER LOW SUNDAY

1. The Day's Major Antiphons. "I will go before you into Galilee; there you shall see Me, as I told you, alleluia, alleluia" (Ben. Ant.). "Bring here your hand and feel the prints of the nails, alleluia; and do not be faithless, but believing, alleluia" (Magn. Ant.). Note how close the Church remains to the risen Savior — an excellent example for us to follow.

2. Scripture Reading (Acts 2:1–47). Today's lessons give us the well-known story of the Holy Spirit's descent on the first Pentecost (see Epistle for the feast) and St. Peter's first sermon on that very same morning. The apostle's words: "These men are not drunk, as you suppose, for it is only the *third hour of the day*," give the reason why the liturgy dedicated Terce to the Holy Ghost.

The chapter's final paragraph describes how those first Christians lived, "They continued steadfastly in the teaching of the apostles and in the communion of the breaking of bread and in the prayers . . . and all who believed were together and held all things in common . . . and continuing daily with one accord in the temple, and breaking bread in their houses, they took their food with gladness and simplicity of heart" (this is the first reference to the Eucharist in conjunction with the *agape*). For our emulation the passage describes an ideal liturgical community.

3. Easter Prolonged. We should always consider it a privilege to say the Sunday Mass on one or more days during the ensuing week. By such repetition its doctrines become more realistic and are more easily transferred to daily life. Nor ought the Ordinary of Eastertide in the Office be passed by without plumbing its riches on successive days. Matins begin with, "The Lord is truly risen, alleluia." By repeating this refrain in the invitatory the Church wishes to imply that we should keep the risen Savior constantly in mind. The hymn of Matins is of ancient

Benedictine origin. It tells how Adam was created according to the image of the divine King, Christ; this image, however, was destroyed through the craftiness of Satan. Christ who arose from the grave today restored to man his former dignity. In the waters of baptism Christ buries our sins and ransoms us through His holy blood (baptism and Eucharist — water and blood).

During the paschal season the individual psalms have no special antiphons; a single antiphon suffices for all the psalms at each Hour. All antiphons and responsories conclude with an alleluia, and because the paschal season is a joyous one, Matins close with the *Te Deum*.

It is easily seen why Lauds, which commemorate the actual hour of resurrection, should contain many paschal motifs. Take the Little Chapter, for instance: "Christ, having risen from the dead, dies now no more, death shall no longer have dominion over Him. For the death that He died, He died to sin once for all, but the life that He lives, He lives unto God" (Rom. 6:9–10). By these words the Church seeks to make us realize that we who have risen with Christ must banish sin and death from our lives.

From patristic times we have the beautiful hymn, *Aurora caelum*. Its theme is the transition from the darkness of the grave to the light of Easter. It describes the joy on earth and the terror in hell (1) when Christ descended into limbo (2); on Easter morn an angel (3) announces the glad message (4).

> Hell's pains are loosed and tears are fled,
> Captivity is captive led;
> The angel crowned with light hath said:
> 'The Lord is risen from the dead!'

The Little Hours, pauses during the day's rush, have their own proper chapters (a sentence or two from Scripture); some point or other of the Easter mystery is recalled and emphasized.

At Prime: "If you have risen with Christ, seek the things that are above, where Christ is seated at the right hand of God. Mind

the things that are above, not the things that are on earth" (Col. 3:1–2).

At Terce: "Christ having risen from the dead, dies now no more, death shall no longer have dominion over Him. For the death that He died, He died to sin once for all, but the life that He lives, He lives unto God" (Rom. 6:9–10).

At Sext: "Christ has risen from the dead, the first-fruits of those who have fallen asleep. For since by a man came death, by a Man also comes resurrection of the dead. For as in Adam all die, so in Christ all will be made to live" (1 Cor. 15:20–22).

At None: "Christ died once for sins, the Just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God. Put to death indeed in the flesh, He was brought to life in the spirit" (1 Pet. 3:18).

Four magnificent texts! Read, re-read and meditate upon them during the entire day. This would be a wonderful way of "living with the Church — *sentire cum Ecclesia.*"

WEDNESDAY AFTER LOW SUNDAY

1. Again today the two major antiphons reflect Easter themes.

"I am the true Vine, alleluia! And you are the true branches, alleluia!" (Ben. Ant.).

The Lamb in a lying position (indicative of sacrifice) is a very ancient symbol. The above combination of symbols occasions this reflection: Through the sacrifice (Lamb) of the Cross (in the Mass) the soul (dove) obtains eternal peace (olive branch).

"Because you have seen Me, Thomas, you believe. Blessed are they who have not seen, and yet have believed, alleluia" (Magn. Ant.).

If only we adopted the Church's method of meditation and kept these two gems in mind from dawn to dusk!

2. Scripture Reading (Acts 3:1 — 4:37). The third chapter of the Acts of the Apostles tells us how Peter miraculously cured the man who had been born lame. "At the ninth hour of prayer" (note the historical background for None), the apostles Peter and John were going up to the Temple. As they were about to enter the sacred precincts, a lame man begged a mite from them. To his request Peter replied, "Silver and gold I have none; but what I have, that I give you. In the Name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, arise and walk."

When all the people had seen that the lame man was now walking about and praising God, Peter addressed the assembled multitude: "Men of Israel, why do you marvel at this, or why do you stare at us, as though by any power or holiness of our own we had made this man walk? . . . . You disowned the Holy and Just One, and asked that a murderer should be granted to you. The Author of Life you killed, whom God has raised up from the dead; whereof we are witnesses. And it is His Name, by means of faith in His Name, that has made strong this man whom you behold and recognize; moreover, it is the faith that comes through Jesus that has given him the perfect health you all see." Many of those who heard the discourse believed, and the number of believers rose to five thousand.

The following morning Peter and John stood before the Sanhedrin and without fear proclaimed: "In the Name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom you crucified, whom God has raised from the dead, even in this Name does he stand here before you, sound. . . . Neither is there salvation in any other. For there is no other Name under heaven given to men by which we must be saved."

Toward the end of the chapter we find another indication of the spirit prevalent among the first Christians: "The multitude

of the believers were of one heart and one soul, and not one of them said that anything he possessed was his own, but they had all things in common. And with great power the apostles gave testimony to the resurrection of Jesus Christ our Lord; and great grace was in them all. Nor was there anyone among them in want. For those who owned lands or houses would sell them and bring the price of what they sold and lay it at the feet of the apostles, and distribution was made to each according as any one had need."

3. **Baptism and Eucharist.** Before we went to bed as children my saintly grandmother would dip her withered and trembling fingers into holy water and sign us with the Cross while saying:

> Holy water, holy Blood,
> To my soul
> Bring nought but good.

Only now do I grasp the deep significance of her words. Holy water is the sign and symbol of those two liquids that purify and enliven the soul, viz., the water of baptism and the precious Blood of the holy Eucharist. The one gives life, the other develops it; both then "bring nought but good" in the highest sense of the words. And the most astonishing part is that both are mentioned in the same verse — in the very same breath; for baptism and Eucharist do belong together. This consideration is also fundamental to today's liturgy.

Perhaps here would be the proper place for this further observation. In certain parishes Low Sunday is First Holy Communion Sunday. Is this liturgically appropriate? I shall give no hasty answer. Liturgical research has now reached a stage that enables us to evaluate religious practices and attitudes independently of their immediate human context, and in relation to their nature and inherent symbolism. Much that was formerly held to be of importance is now deservedly considered accidental, while matters that were regarded as peripheral in times past are now stressed as paramount.

To return to the problem, why is Low Sunday First Communion Sunday? My suspicion is that those responsible for this custom, which is not very old, had a very limited understanding of the liturgy. Their best reason, it seems to me, was deduced from the title, *Dominica in albis* — the Sunday in white, given in the Missal. First communicants, especially the girls, wear white; therefore let them receive First Communion on the Sunday *in albis*. And what beautiful associations oratory could make. Little concern was given to the fact that the full title is *Dominica in albis depositis*, the Sunday when the white garments are discarded; that today for the first time the neophytes came without their white robes as a sign of their being mature Christians; that now they entered into the regular order of Christian life.

That there is liturgical justification for giving children First Holy Communion on the octave day of Easter, I would be the first to admit. For according to general opinion it is not practical to have first Communion on the feast of Easter. But the proper day for First Communion is Easter Sunday; or better, during the Easter vigil service.

Repeatedly the point has been made that Easter must mean resurrection for all of us, individually and as members of the Christian community. The early Christians experienced this resurrection when on Easter eve they received baptism, confirmation, and the holy Eucharist. For them Easter was the one great day on which their divine life began, on which it was confirmed and nourished. Everything of importance in their spiritual lives flowed from the Easter mystery as from one huge fountain — Easter was their day of redemption objectively and subjectively.

Let us continue in this vein. There is little likelihood of making Easter the actual day of baptism for great numbers. Canon Law imposes the obligation of having infants baptized as quickly as possible after birth. But there is a possibility of regaining something of the Easter experience if First Holy Communion became part of the Easter vigil. Indeed only one of the three sacraments would be received; in ancient times you would first have been baptized, then confirmed, and lastly you would have been led

into the church robed in white and carrying a burning candle in order to participate actively in the holy Sacrifice for the first time (reception of the blessed Eucharist is essential for active participation in the full sense of the phrase). And this last observance could be introduced without difficulty. There is no doubt but that the ideal occasion for First Holy Communion is during the Easter vigil.

What an excellent means this would be to re-vitalize the Lenten and Easter liturgy! No longer would it seem so cold and academic.

For Lent would suddenly become a catechumenate for the "enlightened", i.e., the candidates for First Holy Communion. Catechists, nuns, priests are holding special instruction classes for those concerned. How easy it would be to correlate this work with the Lenten liturgy. True, the imposition of ashes at the beginning of Lent is a continuation of medieval penitential discipline, and it would hardly be appropriate to place our innocent, little children with their petty faults in the same class with public sinners. But a solemn reception of candidates for First Holy Communion could be held at the beginning of Lent or on Septuagesima Sunday. How tremendously important Lent would then become in their eyes.

By taking part in the daily liturgy they would learn the Mass by direct participation in it (which certainly should be the principal objective of First Holy Communion instructions). Then toward the end of Lent a kind of scrutiny could be devised, one in the presence of the entire parish, to find out whether they were indeed ready for the step.

There are other details too in the Lenten liturgy that could be employed with profit. On Wednesday after the third Sunday the candidates could be given the Ten Commandments as a kind of conclusion to their preparation for confession. Laetare Sunday would mean an anticipation of the joy and happiness of First Holy Communion, a spring feast day for the First Communicants. On Wednesday during the fourth week there would take place the *apertio aurium* (opening of the ears) as the Lord's

Prayer, the Apostles' Creed and the Four Gospels are solemnly committed to their possession. What wonderful possibilities are at hand for a zealous and imaginative teacher!

Too soon Holy Saturday arrives. I readily admit that difficulties still remain — particularly the heavy work of Easter week; and the ceremonies of Holy Saturday would be too long for children. But with good will some solution should not be impossible. Let the children arrive after the prophecies, for instance. How meaningful the blessing of the baptismal water now becomes, especially in connection with an actual baptism.

Moreover, the church is full of people, since parents too are present. The Mass spontaneously becomes more festive, the *Gloria* with the ringing of the bells and the Easter Alleluia touch the heart more deeply. The faithful are thrilled with holy joy as they see their children receiving Christ — living examples of spiritual resurrection. A single move, and we have been rewarded by a partial experience of primitive Christianity.

In this manner the profound theological truth that the holy Eucharist preserves and develops the graces of baptism receives dramatic expression. Remember my opening words, "Holy water, holy Blood, to my soul bring nought but good." In them lies a program profitable for one's whole life. Each Sunday is "baptism day" and the graces of baptism may be renewed and replenished by receiving Communion during the holy Sacrifice.

There exists no reason why the celebration of First Holy Communion should not extend throughout the entire Easter octave. The parishioners would again have white-robed neophytes in their midst. Daily they would be present at the parish liturgy, in the place of honor. On Saturday they could put aside their Communion garb in a public ceremony, and thus be readied to appear on Low Sunday in ordinary clothing as Christians fully initiated. They had "put on Christ" and now should show how Easter transforms one's every action.

What a tremendously vitalizing effect the adoption of this custom would have on whole sections of liturgical observance

is easily seen. Nor would there be anything to lose. The First Communicants would stand before the faithful as so many silent sermons on resurrection and divine life, God's instruments in bringing youth and grace to all.

THURSDAY AFTER LOW SUNDAY

1. **Today's antiphons** are very personal in tone. In the early morning, I seek my Lord like Mary Magdalen: "My heart is all aflame, I yearn to see my Lord. I seek but do not find where they laid Him, alleluia." In the evening I join Thomas, saying: "I put my finger into the prints of the nails, and my hand into His side as I exclaimed: My Lord and my God, alleluia." Note with what delicacy these two antiphons have been selected. In the morning, longing like Magdalen, I seek Jesus; in the evening I gratefully reflect upon my meeting with Him (in the Mass), an experience similar to Thomas'.

2. **Scripture Reading (Acts 5:1 — 7:60).** Chapter five begins with the report of the dreadful judgment meted out to Ananias and Sapphira, who lied "to the Holy Spirit and by fraud kept back part of the price of the land." Immediate death!

Next in order comes an account of miracles performed by the apostles. "They carried the sick into the streets . . . that, when Peter passed, his shadow at least might fall on some of them . . . and they were all cured." Shortly thereafter the apostles were arrested a second time and scourged. It was the occasion on which Gamaliel spoke so wisely, "If this plan or work is of men, it will be overthrown; but if it is of God, you will not be able to overthrow it." They departed from the Sanhedrin rejoicing that they were found worthy "to suffer disgrace for the Name of Jesus."

In the course of time a dispute arose over the distribution of alms. So the Twelve called together the whole community and made the following declaration, "It is not desirable that we should forsake the word of God and serve at tables. Therefore, brethren, select from among you seven men of good reputation, full of the Spirit and of wisdom, that we may put them in charge of this work. But we will devote ourselves to prayer and to the ministry of the word."

First among those selected was Stephen, a man "full of grace and power who did great wonders and signs among the people." Angry and jealous over Stephen's popularity and success several members of the synagogue of the Libertines brought accusations against him to the Sanhedrin. He made a brilliant defense, showing the Jews how they had been blind since the days of Moses. "(You) stiff-necked and uncircumcised in heart and ear, you always oppose the Holy Spirit; as your fathers did, so you do also. Which of the prophets have not your fathers persecuted? And they killed those who foretold the coming of the Just One, of whom you have now been the betrayers and murderers."

Enraged, they seized Stephen and stoned him. While casting their stones, some of them placed their clothing at the feet of a young man named Saul. This marked the beginning of a great persecution against the community in Jerusalem; with the exception of the apostles, all were scattered abroad through the land of Judea and Samaria.

3. The Saints in Paschal Time. Since Ash Wednesday little attention has been accorded to saints' feast days. The Church was too busy with her children's baptismal renewal. Now, however, after the octave of Easter, the saints come into prominence again. The martyrs in particular find high favor and honor liturgically during the Easter season. For during these days they are closest to the King of martyrs, who through His death set the standard for all martyrs and sanctified their martyrdom. Theirs is a greater share in their King's triumph over suffering and in His Easter glory. This too is the spirit pervading the "Common of Martyrs in Paschaltide." The martyrs are like grapes on the vine of

Christ's Cross. Martyrdom itself becomes transfigured by the Cross shining resplendently in its Easter glory.

Our appreciation of the saints would undoubtedly deepen if we associated their feasts with the current ecclesiastical season. At Christmas the saints formed the royal procession that followed the King as He entered the Holy City (recall the sequence of feasts immediately after Christmas). Now, however, during the Easter season, the saints give testimony to and proclaim Christ's resurrection. All of them "kept Easter inviolate in their way of acting and living." Now they are glorified members of the risen (mystical) Christ and preach to us from heaven: "If you have risen with Christ, seek the things that are above." Make a conscious effort to see the saints commemorated during this season — particularly the martyrs — in the light of the Easter mystery.

FRIDAY AFTER LOW SUNDAY

1. Antiphon. In the morning the Church prays: "Mary Magdalen and the other Mary came to see the sepulcher, alleluia." With these words in mind set out for church today.

2. Scripture Reading (Acts 8:1 — 9:43). The subject concerns the missionary work of the disciples and apostles beyond Jerusalem. The persecution that followed Stephen's stoning brought unexpected blessings to Palestine. Those who were exiled from their homes now travelled about and preached the word of God. Philip went to the capital of Samaria where later Simon, the magician, attempted to buy from Peter and John the power to work miracles. Philip's preaching was markedly successful. When Peter and John heard that many had been baptized, they came to Samaria and imposed hands upon the neophytes in order to confer the Holy Ghost upon them. Next

we read the edifying story describing the conversion of an Ethiopian official (see the Epistle on Easter Thursday).

Breathing threats of slaughter, Saul presently enters the story (hitherto there had been but one casual reference to him at the stoning of Stephen). He was born in the Roman province of Cilicia (two or three years later than Jesus) of parents belonging to the tribe of Benjamin, and enjoyed the privilege of Roman citizenship which often proved most valuable. He was reared as a strict Pharisee, and as a youth went to Jerusalem where he continued his studies on the Law under the celebrated Gamaliel. He acquired skill as a tentmaker and continued this work even when an apostle.

During Christ's public ministry, Saul was not in Palestine; accordingly, he never met Jesus during His earthly life. Upon his return to Judea, Saul found flourishing Christian circles, and immediately became their bitter opponent. When Stephen presented the Christian attitude toward the Temple and the Law, Saul was among those responsible for putting him to death. From then on he led the persecution of the Christians with constantly increasing animosity until the experience on the road to Damascus (c. 34 A.D.). Now read the account of his conversion as given by St. Luke.

SATURDAY AFTER LOW SUNDAY

1. Scripture Reading (Acts 10:1 — 12:25). The tenth chapter provides us with another very edifying incident, the conversion and baptism by Peter of the centurion Cornelius of Caesarea. This was an exceptionally important event in the development of the early Church, so important in fact that divine Providence intervened directly, "Your prayers and your alms have gone up and have been remembered in the sight of God. And now send men to Joppa and fetch one Simon, surnamed Peter. He will tell you what you must do."

The next day while Peter was praying on a roof at the sixth hour, he fell into an ecstasy and beheld the vision of the unclean animals. At the bidding of the Spirit he went to Caesarea with the messengers sent by the Gentile Cornelius; and after the Holy Ghost had come upon all who listened to him in the centurion's house, he baptized them. "Can anyone refuse the water to baptize these, seeing that they have received the Holy Spirit just as we did?" The Church thereby began a new phase in her early history; her doors were now open to both Gentile and Jew.

The next incident narrated in Acts concerns the founding of the first community of Gentile converts at Antioch; here "the disciples were first named Christians." Shortly thereafter another persecution broke out in Jerusalem under Herod. James the Greater was beheaded, the first apostle to offer his life as a martyr. Peter was cast into prison, but through divine intervention was miraculously freed.

2. Saturday and the Blessed Virgin. Saturday is dedicated to the Blessed Virgin whenever no saint's feast occurs. The Mass, *Salve, Sancta Parens* from the Common of the Blessed Virgin, dates from ancient times and is very beautiful. During Easter time several variations may be noted. The Alleluia verse, for instance, reads: "The rod of Jesse has blossomed, a Virgin has given birth to God and Man! God has restored peace by uniting in Himself the lowest to the highest." The reference is to the

work of redemption that Christ has just completed by His resurrection.

The Gospel leads us to the foot of the Cross where we hear the memorable words that Jesus spoke to His Mother and to John: "Woman, behold your Son . . . Son, behold your Mother!" The liturgy cherishes this scene during Paschaltide in order to remind us that Christ made Mary our Mother when He gave John to her as a son. Since that first Good Friday, Mary has been the Mother of Christendom. At the Offertory our hearts sing her praises: "You are blessed, O Virgin Mary, you who carried the Creator of all things! You gave birth to Him who made you, yet ever remained a Virgin, alleluia."

At Matins St. Augustine gives a brief, penetrating contrast between the two greatest women in mankind's history. "By a woman came death, and by a woman life; through Eve destruction, through Mary salvation. The former, when tempted, followed the tempter, the latter, remaining immaculate, gave birth to the Savior. Willingly Eve accepted the beaker handed her by the serpent and offered it to her husband; and from it both drank death unto themselves. But Mary, filled from above with heavenly graces, gave birth to the Life that can make dead flesh live. And who was responsible for this? The Virgin's Son, the Spouse of virgins! It was He who made her a mother while keeping her a virgin."

3. Mary during Easter Time. The Gospels mention no appearance of Jesus to Mary after His resurrection. We may, however, believe that she who experienced the greatest sorrow was the first to know the joy of Easter. She alone preserved an unshaken hope in the resurrection; for she remained quiet and silent while the other women were occupied with preparing the ointments. Now one who hopes for speedy resurrection will not embalm the body.

According to legend Mary spent the night before Easter on Mt. Olivet, full of holy longing and expectation. At dawn, when Golgotha was slowly becoming visible across the valley with its

dreadful memories, the risen Savior suddenly stood before His dear Mother in all His heavenly glory, stretching out to her His arms.

However, as already noted, Sacred Scripture tells us nothing about this. The Church makes Mary's joy her own during this season, praying and singing the beautiful *Regina Caeli* daily. Liturgically-minded Christians know the hymn by heart, in Latin or in the vernacular, to make recitation easy. By force of custom it now replaces the Angelus.

Regina caeli, laetare, alleluia!	O Queen of heaven rejoice, alleluia!
Quia quem meruisti portare, alleluia!	Because the Son you were chosen to bear, alleluia!
Resurrexit sicut dixit, alleluia!	Has risen as He foretold, alleluia!
Ora pro nobis Deum, alleluia!	Pray for us, Oh, pray to God, alleluia!

℣. Rejoice and be glad, O Virgin Mary, alleluia!

℟. For the Lord is truly risen, alleluia!

Let us pray.

O God, through Your loving-kindness the world now rejoices over the resurrection of Your Son, our Lord Jesus Christ. Graciously hear our prayers and grant us the assistance of His Virgin Mother Mary in obtaining the joys of everlasting life. Through the same Christ our Lord.

℟. Amen.

SECOND WEEK AFTER EASTER

During the past two weeks the Church has filled our minds with beautiful and profound considerations on the risen Christ and has flooded our hearts with His Easter graces. She now seeks a single picture which would recapitulate the Easter mystery, and she finds it in that of Jesus as Good Shepherd. It is the picture which will form the background for the coming week.

Many passages in the Scripture lessons, in the psalms, and in the formularies for saints can be fully appreciated only in its light. The Acts will tell us about two great shepherds of souls, Peter and Paul. Wednesday of this week we will celebrate the patronal feast of St. Joseph. The liturgy presents him as the good shepherd of the universal Church (Intr.).

Saturday evening. Try to acquire the habit of preparing yourself for the coming Sunday on the preceding Saturday afternoon or evening. It may take time and effort, but the results are worthwhile. Vespers are helpful in "getting the feel" of the liturgy for the week about to begin. This evening the Good Shepherd knocks at the door of your soul: "I suffered for you, leaving you an example that you should follow in My steps" (Little Chapter). At the Magnificat He speaks again, "I am the Shepherd of the sheep. I am the Way, the Truth, and the Life. I am the Good Shepherd and I know My sheep, and My sheep know Me, alleluia, alleluia."

SECOND SUNDAY AFTER EASTER

I am the Good Shepherd. I know My sheep and My sheep know Me

1. **The Good Shepherd.** As the "Good Shepherd," Christ accompanied us during the weeks preceding and following Easter. On Holy Saturday we prayed:

> Our Shepherd has departed,
> The fount of living water
> At whose death the sun was darkened. . . .

Then two days later:

> Risen is the Good Shepherd
> Who laid down His life for His sheep
> And deigned to die for His flock, alleluia!
> Christ, our Pasch, is sacrificed.

At sunrise today we sing, "I am the Shepherd of the sheep. I am the Way, the Truth and the Life. I am the Good Shepherd and I know My sheep, and My sheep know Me, alleluia, alleluia."

At sunset, "I am the Good Shepherd. My sheep I pasture, and for them I lay down My life, alleluia."

These chants become more arresting when we see Christ symbolized in the sun! At dawn He addresses the world, "I am your Shepherd. I am the Way, the Truth, and the Life." Then at sunset He foretells His death.

It was, in fact, by His death and resurrection that Christ proved Himself to be a Good Shepherd. On the Cross He laid down His life for His sheep. After His resurrection He lovingly gathered together His flock and appointed Peter to take His place as shepherd. Because of the prominence given to these considerations in the Mass formulary, today is known as Good Shepherd Sunday.

2. Holy Mass (Misericordia). Practically all units comprising today's Mass formulary mention the Good Shepherd; the whole, therefore, possesses a remarkable unity. It fills our hearts with joy to find the Gospel's principal sentence occurring in the Alleluia verse and in the Communion antiphon. Very appropriately did Christians of an earlier age select St. Peter's as the station church and worship at the grave of the Good Shepherd's first vicar — "Feed My sheep."

The first word of the Introit catches our attention — *misericordia*, mercy. No attribute is more proper to the Good Shepherd; it moved Him to undergo the passion and now impels Him to continue His work of shepherding after the resurrection. Psalm 32, the Introit psalm, depicts God as the Good Shepherd over the world of nature and in the course of sacred history. "A breath from His mouth created the heavenly hosts," i.e., the stars regarded as little lambs! Pervading the entire Mass is the note of joy struck in the *Introit*: "Rejoice in the Lord, O righteous men!"

An abiding Easter joy here on earth and the everlasting joys of heaven hereafter form the object of our request in the *Collect*. The Good Shepherd theme is not absent from this prayer. Fallen mankind is the lamb that He has rescued. See how poetically this is expressed: "O God, through the humility of Your Son You raised up a fallen world. . . ." The lamb now rests upon His shoulders, blessed with an abiding joy while awaiting those heavenly joys of which Easter time is a foretaste.

We thank You, heavenly Father,
for the call, for the faith,
and for immortality through
Jesus, Your Son ✚

Peter, the station saint, speaks to us in the *Epistle*. It was only after the resurrection that he experienced the Good Shepherd's deepest love and solicitude. The Lord appeared to him before He manifested Himself to the other apostles, a sign that his denial was already forgiven. In glowing words Peter depicts the Shepherd of souls, "Who suffered for you, leaving you an example that you may follow in His steps." (In the Orient shepherds precede their flock, and the sheep follow after.) With infinite patience, He gave Himself up to be crucified, "bearing our sins in His body on the Tree." Then the prince of the apostles closes his discourse with yet another pastoral scene: "For you were as sheep going astray, but now you have returned to the Shepherd and guardian of your souls." Rest like a lamb on the shoulders of the Good Shepherd!

At first glance there seems to be no connection between the two versicles comprising the *Alleluia*; nevertheless they do hold the Mass' profoundest message. It is the word *cognoscere* — to know, that links the two verses together and gives the key to the Mass. For "to know" implies more than mere intellectual perception. It includes trust, understanding, love; it means to live for one another, to be intimately one in a loving union such as exists between mother and child.

In this sense we must understand Christ's words, "I know Mine and Mine know Me." Here He is telling us that a unique oneness exists between Himself and the members of His mystical

"I know Mine and Mine know Me." Below is pictured a cross; the Epistle says: "Christ has suffered for us . . . through His wounds we are healed." At top: a basket of Eucharistic bread, for we come to "know" Jesus in the breaking of Bread — even as the disciples at Emmaus.

Body — the prototype for which unique oneness is to be found in the Persons of the Most Holy Trinity. Where is this unity more perfectly and clearly expressed than in the Eucharist? In Christ's breaking of bread with the disciples at Emmaus, Christians have always sensed a picture of the Eucharistic banquet. These considerations help us to detect the deeper implications of the Mass mystery.

In the *Gospel* we meet the Good Shepherd who gives His life for His sheep and who unites Himself most intimately with them. In the Mass He again sacrifices His life for us and through the Eucharistic banquet He "abides in us and we in Him." Compare the final words of the Gospel with those of the Epistle; the one gives God's plan, the other its ultimate fulfillment: "Them also I must bring. . . . For you were as sheep going astray, but now you have returned to the Shepherd."

Hitherto we listened to the Shepherd, now at the *Offertory* processional we hear the sheep. As the congregation proceeds to the altar it seems as though God's sheep were flocking around their Shepherd. And in this context their song is readily intelligible: "O God, my God, it is for You I watch at break of day! In Your Name I lift up my hands" (as I offer my gifts).

In the *Secret* we meet one of the favorite themes of the Roman liturgy, "May it (the Mass) effect in reality what it represents in mystery" (i.e., the Good Shepherd is now standing before us and during the Mass He will become sacramentally present: may He graciously fulfill His promises in our regard). With peculiar appropriateness the Mass' leitmotif resounds again in the *Communion* chant; for here on earth it is impossible "to know" more intimately than through the Eucharist. The *Postcommunion* reminds us of our baptism, "We have received from You the grace of a new life"; strengthened by this sacred meal may we enjoy forever this holiest of gifts.

3. Divine Office. During Matins two "good shepherds," Popes Leo and Gregory, speak to us. Both were vicars of the "Shepherd and guardian of our souls," both have been accorded the title "Great" by history. Leo takes the forty day period after

the resurrection as his topic. "Those days, dearly beloved, which elapsed between our Lord's resurrection and ascension did not drift by fruitlessly, but great and sacred mysteries were confirmed, and profound truths revealed. During that time the fear of death and its terrors was removed, and the body's immortality as well as that of the soul was made manifest. Further, the Holy Spirit was poured out upon all the apostles when the Lord breathed upon them, and to blessed Peter the apostle were entrusted the keys of the kingdom together with the care of the Lord's flock. . . ."

Pope St. Gregory delivered today's homily in the station church of St. Peter. He pointed out how Christ fulfills His words, "The Good Shepherd lays down His life for His sheep," both on the Cross and in the holy Eucharist. "The Good Shepherd sacrificed His life for His sheep that in this sacrament He might effect the change to His body and His blood and therewith fill the sheep that He had redeemed with the food of His own flesh." In a special way the parable warns pastors of souls to sacrifice temporal goods — even life itself — for their sheep. "Our first duty is to expend our earthly possessions in loving care of Christ's sheep; then, if necessary, we must alleviate their needs even at the cost of our own lives."

4. **Scripture Reading (Acts 13:13–33).** It does not seem wholly accidental that this week's Scripture readings begin with the missionary apostolate of St. Paul. The first ten chapters of the Book of Acts concentrate upon the activity of St. Peter, the remaining chapters describe the work of St. Paul. Today we follow Paul on his first missionary journey from the island of Cyprus to Asia Minor and hear him speak extempore in the synagogue at Antioch.

5. **The Parable.** Jesus intended the beautiful parable of the Good Shepherd with its many consoling truths and promises for men of every century, including the twentieth. We are all too prone to evaluate the words of the Gospel in an exclusively historical sense. The liturgy's primary aim is to portray the present, not the past, to give grace and life along with history.

You must, therefore, give the parable a present day context, apply it personally. After each sentence stop and say: Christ is doing this today — and to help me.

The parable brings to our attention three consoling truths: Christ gives His life for His sheep; He remains with them constantly through the bond of grace; He will not rest content until there be but *one* flock and *one* shepherd.

Now how do these points affect me personally? a) My Shepherd's death means my deliverance — why, even at this very moment of Mass, redemption's graces are flooding my soul. b) Between Christ and myself there must exist a closer intimacy than even that between brothers, relatives, or friends. c) It is through Christ's efforts that I have been brought into the fold, and He is ever striving to make me a more perfect member of His flock.

In order to realize these ends, Christ instituted His Church. This Church is His representative. There we may approach Him, there He is close to us, there He continues His presence: "I am with you all days, even unto the consummation of the world." Through the Church He speaks to us; in the Church flow the rivers of grace from Calvary's Cross; by means of the Church Christ seeks to become united personally with each of us. Oh, if we only would regard the Church as Christ mystically present in our midst! At this point I would like to single out two ways by which Christ fulfills His office of Shepherd in the Church, viz., through His words and through His very body.

The words He spoke will never die. "Heaven and earth shall pass away, but My words shall not pass away." Christ's words are as pregnant with life now as when they were first spoken. They give us the mind of our Good Shepherd as He instructs, warns, and consoles us; they are the words of a father, a mother, a brother, a friend, a judge. Once upon a time Christ's words performed miracles, they have not lost their power! "Young man, I say to you: arise. This day you shall be with Me in paradise." Treasure Christ's words most highly.

Christ's body in the Eucharist gives flesh to His words in the

Gospel. Never disjoin one from the other. For together they constitute our most valuable earthly treasure, together they give us the whole Christ. What He promises in the Gospel He fulfills in the Eucharist. And thus the Mass, comprising the word and the body of Christ, brings Him completely to us. In the Gospel He says, "I am the Good Shepherd"— in the Eucharistic Sacrifice the Good Shepherd becomes present. In the Gospel He proclaims, "I lay down My life for My sheep"— in the Eucharistic Sacrifice He pours His life into our souls. In the Gospel He tells us, "I know Mine and Mine know Me"— in the Eucharistic Sacrifice He fulfills His claim: Whoever eats My flesh abides in Me and I in Him. In the Gospel He says, "Other sheep I have . . . them also must I bring"— through the Eucharistic Sacrifice He builds up His flock, gathering stray sheep into the fold.

These, then, are our two greatest treasures, Christ's words and Christ's body. By embracing both we embrace our Savior whole and entire.

MONDAY OF THE SECOND WEEK AFTER EASTER

1. Antiphons at Lauds and Vespers. During the week we will not miss any occasion to say again the beautiful Sunday Mass of the Good Shepherd. Today at the Benedictus the Church bids us: "Go into the world, alleluia; and teach all nations, alleluia." Our blessed Mother's canticle of praise is introduced with: "The Good Shepherd lays down His life for His sheep, alleluia."

2. Scripture Reading (Acts 15:1 — 16:40). Today's account concerns the memorable council of the apostles held in Jerusalem. It was a decision of historic importance when they declared that baptized Gentiles were not bound to observe the Mosaic

Law. "And after a long debate, Peter got up and said to them: Brethren, you know that in early days God made choice among us, that through my mouth the Gentiles should hear the Gospel and believe. And God, who knows the heart, bore witness by giving them the Holy Spirit just as He did to us; and He made no distinction between us and them, but cleansed their hearts by faith. Why then do you now try to test God by putting on the neck of the disciples a yoke which neither our fathers nor we have been able to bear? But we believe that we are saved through the grace of the Lord Jesus, just as they are."

Shortly thereafter Paul began his second missionary journey, taking Silas along as his companion. They travelled through Syria and Cilicia, and visited the churches in Asia that Paul had founded on his first journey. In city after city they promulgated the decrees and directives enjoined by the apostles and elders in Jerusalem and exhorted the brethren to persevere in the faith.

At Troas a man from Macedonia appeared to Paul in a vision and begged him, "Come over into Macedonia and help us." So they continued their journey westward by boat and soon their feet touched European soil for the first time.

In Philippi they were thrown into prison; as a precautionary measure their feet were fastened in stocks. At midnight, while the two were praying and singing, an earthquake shook the

area. Their chains were jarred loose, likewise the doors of the prison. Fearing that his prisoners had escaped, the jailor drew his sword and was on the point of committing suicide. Paul quieted him, and then instructed him in the Word of God; that very night the jailor and his whole family were baptized.

The following morning Paul and his companion were to be set free. When, however, the magistrates heard that Paul was a Roman citizen, they came, apologized, and courteously requested them to leave the city. Toward the church at Philippi, the first Christian community in Europe, Paul always cherished a special affection.

3. Sacred Heart Devotion in the Ancient Church. In every century Christians have tendered the deepest personal love toward their Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. One could easily compose another Canticle of Canticles with the expressions and outpourings of love towards Christ that have welled up from the hearts of His faithful followers during the past 1900 years. From the day that St. Paul wrote, "Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? For to me to live is Christ and to die is gain" (Rom. 8:35; Phil. 1:21), down to our own times it has been as if "day unto day gives the message, one night whispers to the next" (Ps. 18:3), that message of heartfelt intimacy and love toward Christ. The form or phraseology will vary according to time and locality (and a wide latitude is evident here), but there ever remains a sure and solid inner core.

To express one's love for Christ by devotion to the Sacred Heart is indeed most commendable. How many souls it has inflamed in recent decades with ardor and zeal for the things of God! But if I wish to express my love for Christ in some other manner, you must not object. I may, for instance, prefer to follow the method so dear to the ancient Church and express my affection toward Christ by loving and honoring Him as my Good Shepherd — an approach our Savior Himself proposed. What a Sacred Heart picture means commonly today, that the Good Shepherd picture meant to the early Christians; and the latter still remains the liturgy's favorite.

Pictures and images of Christ as Good Shepherd antedate other representations of our Savior and were more widely used in the ancient Church. On the most ancient monument of Christian art, the paintings in the Catacomb of Domitilla (first century A.D.), Christ appears as the Good Shepherd. From the first four centuries we have several hundred pictures of the Good Shepherd in various catacombs. It is simply impossible to estimate how often the Good Shepherd is represented in mosaics, statues and paintings after the fifth century. It follows that the "Christus picture" of the ancient Church was that of the Good Shepherd.

What truths did this "Christus picture" teach the early Christians? The great truths of redemption objectively considered, particularly these three: a) Christ sacrificed His life for His sheep; b) He nourishes their spiritual life by means of the Eucharist; c) He leads His lambs to heavenly pastures. Death and resurrection, Eucharist and longing for the parousia — these fundamental truths the early Christians saw spontaneously in their beautiful Good Shepherd pictures.

These truths are likewise basic to the liturgy. At each new turn in the Church's year of grace we need not seek long to find Good Shepherd passages. It is as if Mother Church said to us: "The Good Shepherd proves His love throughout the liturgical year, each season emphasizes a different phase of His affection." In the course of the year, therefore, the liturgy covers the various aspects of Christ's redemptive activity.

What aspects are accentuated now during Paschaltide? All three — against the background of Easter joy. In clearest outline we see Christ's redemptive mission now completed. This could not be expressed better than in terms of the Good Shepherd. Mankind had gone astray, had fallen among the thorns; in the lowly garb of human nature Christ came to seek the lost sheep. The thorns He wove into a crown about His head, and with the Shepherd's staff of the Cross He rescued the lost lamb, bearing it out of the desert of sin upon His own shoulders. Every act during His whole life He dedicated to the good of His sheep, not merely His death. His every move, then as now, had as its

object to save lost sheep. By enabling us to share in His divine life is another way in which He sacrifices His life for us. For in the mystical Body He seeks to extend His life; in His Church Christ attains a certain fullness that otherwise would not be His.

Now at Easter, when the work of redemption is completed and He is standing in the midst of His redeemed sheep, let us listen to His cry: "I am the Good Shepherd, I lay down My life for

My sheep." These are words that should engender deepest love, a love that bursts forth in acts of love. It was this consideration that stirred Paul's soul to its very depths. Christ's death and resurrection, our call to grace and redemption — these basic truths are but part of the great Easter mystery brought home to us in the Good Shepherd picture.

Our blessed Savior's second function as Good Shepherd is to nourish His sheep with His own flesh and blood. By means of the Eucharist He gathers His flock together and remains in closest communion with them. "I know Mine and Mine know Me." The Eucharist too belongs to the paschal mystery, for Christ has "come not in water only, but also in the blood."

The design. The Good Shepherd after sketches in the catacomb of Sts. Peter and Marcellinus. Early third century.

And thirdly, when we peer into the future, we again see the Good Shepherd, now leading His sheep into celestial pastures. That is the chief reason why Good Shepherd pictures appear so frequently in ancient cemeteries. These representations portray hope in a bodily resurrection unto blessed beatitude. We modern Christians may experience difficulty in relating Christ as Good Shepherd to hope in a future life; this was not the case among the early Christians for whom the Good Shepherd among His sheep indicated the "quickening of life after death."

Even though we may be less conscious of the fact, hope in bodily resurrection is a genuine Easter theme. How irrefutably St. Paul deduced our own eventual resurrection from that of Christ! "But if there is no resurrection of the dead, neither has Christ risen; and if Christ has not risen, vain then is our preaching, vain too is your faith. But as it is, Christ has risen from the dead, the first-fruits of those who have fallen asleep" (1 Cor. 15:13ff).

The present Easter season, then, is the time *par excellence* to deepen hope in bodily resurrection. "I believe in the resurrection of the body." Here we have the reason why we find it so natural to celebrate the memory of the martyrs; for to them the Church has assigned a special "Common during Paschaltide," a veritable Canticle of Christian hope in resurrection from the grave.

How inexhaustible the spiritual treasures in this Good Shepherd picture! Our Redeemer, our Nourisher, our Sanctifier — Jesus. Past, present, and future come to focus here as I realize how He predestined me and called me through baptism years ago, how He is nourishing me by the Eucharist and divine worship at present, how He will bring back to life my dead body in God's own good time. I look up to the Good Shepherd picture, it shows how Christ means everything to me. "For to me to live is Christ and to die is gain" (Phil. 1:21).

Devotion and love toward the Sacred Heart is indeed most laudable. Nevertheless, this approach to Christ does not represent His work in our lives as fully and profoundly as does that of the Good Shepherd.

TUESDAY OF THE SECOND WEEK AFTER EASTER

1. Antiphons. In the morning we hear the mandate to missionize from the lips of our Lord: "Go into the world and teach all nations, baptizing them in the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost, alleluia" (Ben. Ant.). Our evening chant again concerns the Good Shepherd: "But the hireling, whose own the sheep are not, sees the wolf coming, leaves the sheep and flees. And the wolf snatches and scatters the sheep, alleluia" (Magn. Ant.).

2. Scripture Reading (Acts 17:1 — 19:40). From Philippi Paul journeyed on to Thessalonica, where he founded a very devout and docile community (as shown by his two epistles to the Thessalonians), then down through Berea to Athens. Athens, the center of the Greek world, famed for its scholarship and art, and the home of important schools of philosophy, reacted coldly to the Gospel message. Aroused to holy indignation upon seeing idol after idol, Paul eagerly responded to an invitation to speak in the midst of the Areopagus.

"Men of Athens, I see that in every respect you are extremely religious. For as I was going about and observing objects of your worship, I found also an altar with this inscription: 'To the Unknown God.' What therefore you worship in ignorance, that I proclaim to you. God, who made the world and all that is in it, since He is Lord of heaven and earth, does not dwell in temples built by hands. . . . Nor is He far from any one of us. For in Him we live and move and are, as indeed some of your own poets have said, '*For we are also His offspring*' " (Acts 17:22ff). Then Paul warned them to do penance and spoke about the resurrection of the dead. This point proved too much for most of them and they began to mock him. Some, however, embraced the faith, among them Dionysius the Areopagite.

Not long after, Paul left Athens for Corinth. Here he founded a flourishing community and remained more than two years. Corinth was the apostle's "crown of glory"; it may also be called

his greatest "problem child," as may be gathered from his two letters to the Corinthians. The apostle completed his second missionary circuit upon returning to Antioch by way of Jerusalem. Shortly thereafter he set out upon his third missionary journey, the one which brought to full flower his apostolic labors. At Ephesus, the principal city of Asia Minor, he labored for three years.

3. **Symbols of the Resurrection.** Ancient Christian symbols may be reduced to two categories: the object of the first is Christian cult, especially the two sacraments of divine life, baptism and the Eucharist; the object of the second is life after death, bodily resurrection and blessed immortality. We may, however, see the two categories simply as one, viz., divine life now through grace, hereafter in glory.

Of the various symbols that point to life after death, two that are taken from the animal kingdom are especially noteworthy, the peacock and the phoenix. The peacock, frequently found on ancient Christian sarcophagi, in the catacombs, and in the basilicas, represents the immortality of future life. At times the peacock is pictured picking at grapes; in these cases the symbol is Eucharistic, since the Eucharist contains and bestows immortality ("He who eats My flesh . . . I will raise him up on the last day.") The symbolism attributed to the peacock and the phoenix is derived from paganism.

"Far to the East," says Lactantius as he recounts the legend, "there is a sacred grove resembling paradise. It is always flooded with spring's soft sunshine. The weather continually remains most agreeable; never do disturbing atmospheric changes occur. Neither sorrow nor sickness nor death are known there. The

grove is watered by a crystal-clear spring; its high trees are laden with luscious fruit which never falls to the ground. A phoenix, dedicated to the sun-god Phoebus, is the grove's sole inhabitant.

"At the first gleam of dawn this bird bathes four times in the limpid stream and drinks four times from the spring. Then he flies to the tallest tree and there awaits the sunrise. He greets the first beam of sunlight with a song more beautiful than any earthly music. After the sun is fully risen, he beats his wings with a ringing sound and reverently salutes the beaming countenance of Phoebus.

"When a thousand years have passed, the phoenix senses that his course is run. He leaves his home and paradise, and flies into the world where death holds sway. Soon his wings have carried him to Phoenicia, where he stops to rest in some remote place. He selects the highest palm tree and builds there a nest to serve as a grave. Now the phoenix dies only in order that he might live, and create himself anew. Therefore he gathers the finest spices of every land, beds himself therein, and dies. The carcass, being set on fire by the sun's heat, generates life as it burns to ashes. For in these ashes is the germ of new life. Soon there comes forth a milk-white worm which, transforming itself like the caterpillar into a butterfly, becomes a phoenix and nourishes itself on heavenly dew.

"Full grown, he prepares for the return flight home. Into a single bundle he gathers the remains of his former body together with the spices and carries it to the altar of the sun-god in the temple of Heliopolis. Whoever sees him is amazed by his beauty. His plumage shimmers with beautiful colors, his eyes sparkle like a hyacinth, and a crown of light encircles his head. No bird, and certainly no animal, rivals him in glory. He is kingly in appearance and although gigantic in size flies gracefully and without effort. Thus the phoenix appears to admiring eyes. All Egypt flocks to see and greet the bird, and the day of his appearance is officially recorded. The birds of the heavens gather as an escort. But the phoenix flies back alone to his haven, the sacred grove."

From this myth ancient Christian art has culled its favorite symbol for the resurrection of the body to eternal life. Closely allied to this symbol is that of the palm tree, which in Greek bears the name, *phoenix*.

WEDNESDAY OF THE SECOND WEEK AFTER EASTER

1. **Antiphons.** At dawn our minds are filled with the Easter morning scene in the garden with the empty tomb. The holy women tremble with excitement over the angel's message, and as they hurry to tell it, Jesus Himself meets them, "Go take word to My brethren, alleluia, that they should set out for Galilee, alleluia; there they will see Me, alleluia, alleluia" (Ben. Ant.). Throughout the week the beautiful picture of the Good Shepherd gladdens our evening prayer, "As the Father knows Me, thus do I know the Father. My very life do I surrender for My sheep, alleluia" (Magn. Ant.).

2. **ALLELUIA: Our Easter Song.** Although we have frequently commented on the meaning and liturgical implications of the Easter *Alleluia*, it would be most opportune now during holy Eastertide to meditate more profoundly and at length on this unique acclamation. The wealth of material at hand calls for a continuation of the subject on several days (see pp. 93, 97, 100; for the full development of the subject by Fr. Paschal Botz, O.S.B., cf. *Orate Fratres*, vol. 20, pp. 241–250).

Like *Amen*, the *Alleluia* comes from another world, from the liturgy of the Old Testament. It was born into that liturgy and Jewish family piety because of a great historic miracle. The

divine delivery from Egypt and the guidance of the Israelites into the Promised Land comprise, in fact, a whole series of miracles. The Passover is the liturgical symbol of it all. The birth of God's people out of the Red Sea is its theme. On the shores of Egypt they intoned their first great canticle of praise for His great deeds. "The Lord brought forth His people with joy, alleluia, and His chosen ones with gladness, alleluia, alleluia" (Ps. 104:43, Introit, Easter Saturday).

At that early Sinai period the word *Alleluia* was probably unknown, but strictly speaking it does not matter. What matters is that they actually "*praised the Lord*." The first Passover, which Yahweh Himself unfolded on Sinai and during forty years of desert incubation, is the birthday of the *Alleluia*. The events and the joy engendered are God's work. That joy was handed down from father to son with the annual celebration of the paschal lamb: "and this day shall be for a memorial to you, and you shall keep it a *feast to the Lord* in your generations with an everlasting observance" (Ex. 12:14).

As time went on, in temple and synagogue, the Israelites sang the Hallel-psalms in memory of their delivery. Wisdom 18:9 relates how the Jews, while offering the sacrifice of the paschal lamb, were "*singing the praises* of the fathers." Under King Josias (about 620 B.C.) a solemn Phase took place amid the singing of psalms (2 Par. 35:15). Even before this, King Ezechias and "the children of Israel that were found at Jerusalem kept the feast of unleavened bread seven days *with great joy praising the Lord* every day; the Levites also and the priests with instruments . . . (2 Par. 30:21).

Alleluia psalms traditionally served the great feasts of the Pasch, Pentecost, Tabernacles, Dedication and New Moon. One special group is called the Egyptian Hallel psalms (112–117). They begin in the Hebrew text with an *Alleluia*-acclamation, an ancient antiphon. Our Lord probably used psalms 116–117, of which the latter remains the Church's classic Easter psalm, when He instituted the new Pasch at the Last Supper. "And having sung the psalms they went out to Mount Olivet" (Mt. 26:30). In

doing so Jesus and His disciples followed the custom laid down for the family or "private" celebration of the feast. Another joyous group are the Great Hallel psalms 119–135. A third series, psalms 146–150, carry the *Alleluia-acclamation* both before and after each psalm, thus foreshadowing our antiphonal usage.

Alleluia means "praise the Lord." The Hebrew words "praise" and "Yahweh" are contracted and transliterated into *hallelu-Yah*. Our liturgy has inherited, through St. Jerome's Latin version, the Greek form *Alleluia*. Because its meaning was clear in the popular mind, the Septuagint translators did not translate it and so it has kept its Hebrew coloring in all modern languages. As indicated, it is by origin a popular, joyful acclamation to a psalm. In the Old Testament, *Alleluia* is exclusively liturgical, an important fact that is further attested by its use only in Book V (more strictly liturgical) of the Hebrew psalms.

But the *Alleluia* has also a Christian birthday, namely in Christ's work and person. While He fulfilled an Old Law custom in the New Passover, in chanting *Alleluia*-psalms, He also gave it a new meaning. His Passion and Cross brought new joy into the world. With the fourth cup of the Last Supper the Christian liturgy and Mysterium were born, for which the old festivals and *Alleluias* served as types. In the Cenacle we have more than history: we have Mystery, a new order of divine Reality, Christ's redemptive work perpetuated under sacrificial signs. The Eucharist is the symbol of God's new Presence with His people. It means all that the Passover meant and more: delivery from darkness, death and sin, the birth of a new People and Church, their introduction to a new land. And *Alleluia* is the new victory song, the pure wine of the winepress, the highest joy this side of the heavenly Jerusalem. The new *Alleluia* is also God's work.

3. **Scripture Reading (Acts 20:17–38).** No one would want to omit completely the edifying lesson giving St. Paul's farewell address to the presbyters of the church at Ephesus. "From Miletus, however, he sent to Ephesus for the presbyters of the church; and when they had come to him and were assembled, he said

to them: You know in what manner I have lived with you all the time since the first day that I came into the province of Asia, serving the Lord with all humility and with tears and in trials that befell me because of the plots of the Jews; how I have kept back nothing that was for your good, but have declared it to you and taught you in public and from house to house, urging Jews and Gentiles to turn to God in repentance and to believe in our Lord Jesus Christ.

"And now, behold, I am going to Jerusalem, compelled by the Spirit . . . and (you) will see my face no longer. Therefore I call you to witness this day that I am innocent of the blood of all; for I have not shrunk from declaring to you the whole counsel of God. Take heed to yourselves and to the whole flock in which the Holy Spirit has placed you as bishops, to rule the Church of God, which He has purchased with His own blood. . . . Watch, therefore, and remember that for three years night and day I did not cease with tears to admonish every one of you.

"And now I commend you to God and to the word of His grace, who is able to build up and to give the inheritance among all the sanctified. I have coveted no one's silver or gold or apparel. You yourselves know that these hands of mine have provided for my needs and those of my companions. . . . Remember the word of the Lord Jesus, that He Himself said, 'It is more blessed to give than to receive.'

"Having said this, he knelt down and prayed with them all. And there was much weeping among them all and they fell on Paul's neck and kissed him, being grieved most of all at his saying that they would no longer see his face. And they escorted him to the ship."

THURSDAY OF THE SECOND WEEK AFTER EASTER

1. **Antiphons.** "You are a lone pilgrim, and you have not heard about Jesus, how they delivered Him to be condemned to death? Alleluia" (Ben. Ant.). "Other sheep I have that are not of this fold. Them also I must bring, and they shall hear My voice, and there shall be one fold and one shepherd, alleluia" (Magn. Ant.). What a beautiful vision! At the end of the day we look forward to the end of the world and with Christ see but one Church on the face of the earth.

2. **Scripture Reading (Acts 24:10–27).** On several occasions charismatically gifted individuals begged Paul not to continue his journey to Jerusalem. When this happened at Caesarea, he replied, "What do you mean by weeping and breaking my heart? For I am ready not only to be bound but even to die at Jerusalem for the Name of the Lord Jesus" (Acts 21:13). But when they could not persuade him, they acquiesced and said, "The Lord's will be done."

Upon his arrival in Jerusalem the apostle was received in a most friendly manner by the brethren; but they too warned him of the danger. It was not long before he was recognized, and immediately the whole city was aroused. In the rioting Paul was dragged from the Temple. As protection from the fury of the people, the Roman guard proceeded to take him into custody. At this point Paul requested and obtained permission to address the people. It was a magnificent apology. Soon after he was taken

The design. The sheep (Jews and Gentiles) approach Christ glorified (cross in victory wreath). Modelled after a design in Ravenna.

to Caesarea, to Felix the governor, for further hearing and kept in chains for almost two years.

3. ALLELUIA of the Bride. For fifty days the Church ceases not to indulge in the pure joy of singing *Alleluia*. Her Easter liturgy unfolds the wide range of its meaning. At the center of the Easter Mystery stands the risen Savior, glorious and triumphant. He alone has trodden the winepress and paid the price of ransom. "The Lamb has redeemed the sheep." Triumphant over His enemies, He has broken satan's empire and established His own. His judgment and justice are secure; He is the Judge of the living and the dead. Victorious in love unto death, His will to suffer is now glorified in unbloody signs and so He is present to His spouse, the Church. She unveils the jewelled Cross to remind us of His divinity and His victory.

But Christ is no longer alone: we are with Him sharing in His triumph. On Holy Saturday new Christians are born into God. After repeating the long story of creation, sin and delivery from Egypt, Mother Church baptizes her catechumens in the pneumatic waters of the font. Washed in the Red Sea of Christ's Blood, they are led like thirsting sheep to the table of Sacrifice. There she quenches their thirst and nourishes their new life of divine sonship with the Body and Blood of the Savior. Halting them before Christ in the Gospel, that first pure message of His rising from the dead, she gives her *nova progenies*, her new offspring, their first unforgettable mystical lesson. *Annuntio vobis gaudium magnum quod est* ALLELUIA. It is a vibrant, triple *Alleluia,* ever mounting in joy, repeated by the faithful and followed by the Easter psalm 117: *Praise the Lord for He is good, for His mercy endures forever*, together with Hallel-psalm 116!

At that overwhelming message, if ever, the Christian realizes the identity of the Easter celebration with the entire redemptive work of Christ, the identity of baptism with spiritual resurrection, the identity also of his own new life with Christ's. "For you have died and your life is hidden with Christ in God" (Col. 3:3).

At that moment he sees, as if in ecstasy of divine light, that the sudden reversal of his fate and his return from the depths of sin and death is all God's work. "This is the Lord's doing. . . . This is the day which the Lord has made: let us be glad and rejoice therein" (Ps. 117:23f.). *Alleluia*!

Easter is the feast of life, of the life of God in us. "The author of life you killed, whom God has raised up from the dead, whereof we are witnesses" (Acts 3:15). Our Savior announces in the Introit of Easter: "I arose and am still with you, alleluia!" Christmas and Easter are reverse pictures of one Mystery in the world. At the nativity of our Lord, we celebrate the birth of God into human form: at Easter we celebrate the birth of man into divine form. Christmas is the downward incarnation of the divine; Easter the upward divinization of the human. The human infancy of the Son of God is the model and pattern for our divine sonship of God. The former is the beginning and cause of the latter: with the hypostatic union God made an indestructible beginning of reaching out for humanity and uniting it to Himself, a process He continues in baptism.

Baptism is our first resurrection. Mystically, it destroys in us "the body of sin" and makes us "a new creature." We experience the new life of God, that deathless divine principle which breaks the confines of mortality and puts our whole being into an eternal Presence. We too have risen. By a transformation as sudden and almost as great as Christ's rising from the dead, we step from the grave of our fallen selves into the living image of God's Son. "He has also predestined (us) to become conformed to the image of His Son" (Rom. 8:29). Baptism is our Easter morning: we have new faith and a new divine Presence in our lives. It is more than an elevation of the mind to God, more than a moral renovation of the will to virtue. Christ Himself touches our dead selves with the fringe of a sacramental sign and we live with a new divine principle of youth. That is the experience of Easter.

All this happens in the bosom of the Church. The touch of divine life on our natural human lives takes place in the Church

of Christ. We receive our conquering faith (1 Jn. 5:4) in and from the visible Mystical Body of Christ. There we are redeemed from ignorance, blindness of heart, false idols, from sin, death and the chain of satan. There we enter God's kingdom; there we are conformed to Christ's image by a mystic death and resurrection; there we grow in the holiness of Christ and "offer spiritual sacrifices"; there we "are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a purchased people" (1 Pet. 2:1–10); there our petitions are granted (fifth Sunday, Rogation Day, Ascension).

It is the Church that makes our faith a certainty in hope. With feasts and sacred signs she welds a new chain of certitude, in which each link is a sacramental guarantee of our future hope. In the Church, and nowhere else, does the risen Christ work out this consciousness of faith and the hope of glory; nowhere else does He flood our natural faculties with such light and life as to touch off the *Alleluia* of perpetual joy. The surge of supernatural joy is in the Church. The Holy Spirit of joy Himself stirs up faith and hope and love and fills His vast Church with *Alleluias*, like countless whitecaps on ocean waves that are born of earth and heaven, water and Spirit. And so the *Alleluia* of the Church's liturgy rises from our risen nature, caught upward by the breath of the Spirit and momentarily symbolic of heaven's rapture. The power of the waters rejoices the City of God (Ps. 45:5).

The *Alleluia* is essentially eucharistic, "for Christ, our Pasch has been sacrificed" (1 Cor. 5:7). From its eucharistic center it radiates to the Divine Office in all the Hours of the Church. As it is oriental and from the East has filled the West, so from Easter it has spread to all the Sundays and feasts of the Church year (at the time of Gregory the Great). Just as it retained its Semitic coloring, so it kept its eucharistic character. Only during Lent, from Septuagesima on, does the *Alleluia* come to rest. While the Eastern liturgies retain the *Alleluia* during Lent (and for funerals), the Latin Church prefers to dramatize her joy the more

on Holy Saturday. With a sure instinct for training her children, she emphasizes the daily Mass in Lent (the Greek liturgy kept the *Alleluia* but let the Mass recede) and keeps the Easter psalm 117 on the Sundays of Lent, besides the daily Hallel psalms 148–150. Much could be said in favor of the *Alleluia* at funerals. The Latin Church could authorize its use, for instance after *In Paradisum*; in fact, it was once in use in Rome according to St. Jerome (Letter 76, To Marcella). That is a matter of positive liturgical legislation.

FRIDAY OF THE SECOND WEEK AFTER EASTER

1. Antiphons. At sunrise we pray, "Did not the Christ have to suffer these things before entering into His glory? Alleluia" (Ben. Ant.). And at sunset our Good Shepherd again speaks to us: "As the Father knows Me, I know the Father; and I lay down My life for My sheep, alleluia" (Magn. Ant.).

2. Scripture Reading (Acts 25:1–12). Wishing to ingratiate himself with the Jews, Felix left Paul in prison, even when he was on the point of being replaced by Portius Festus. At last Paul's case came to court, and Jews from Jerusalem made many and grievous accusations against him, none of which they could prove. But Festus, wishing to do the Jews a favor, asked Paul if he would consent to be judged at Jerusalem. Paul answered, "I am standing at the tribunal of Caesar; there I ought to be tried. To Jews I have done no wrong, as you yourself know very well. But if there is no ground to their charges against me, no one can give me up to them; I appeal to Caesar."

Some days later King Agrippa came to Caesarea and Paul was brought before him. Agrippa was convinced that he had "done nothing to deserve death or imprisonment." It was then decided to grant Paul's appeal to Caesar and that he should be sent to Rome.

3. ALLELUIA — Joy According to God. To search out the meaning and spirit of the *Alleluia*, we have looked to the sacred Scriptures and the liturgy rather than to any untrained instinct of joy. *Alleluia* is not a sweet, sentimental melody that works on us unconsciously because Lent is over, but it is the embodiment of the highest truth and logic of revelation. Nor is it the celebration of joy without creed in the revivalist fashion, but tangible joy trained on the doctrine of sin and redemption and incorporation into Christ. Christians base their Easter joy on conscious beliefs, and their *Alleluia* is the epitome of their revealed world of religious thought and sentiment.

By silencing the *Alleluia* in Lent the Church actually prepares us for it. On the day of suppression she begins to retell the story of original sin which closed the gates of paradise. Sin killed joy then and still does so. The sinner departs from God's will and gets a counterfeit joy, called pleasure. Lent is the sinner's return to God via the *Amen* of God's will. After praying *Amen* we are ready for *Alleluia.* First we die to our sinful self, then we rejoice with a God-made joy.

Lent serves the baptized Christian even more than the catechumen at the present time, and the baptized believer is renewed by the virtue and the sacrament of penance. Detachment, renouncement, judgment over sin and the world are the crusts of sorrow for Lent, but they reopen paradise for us. Although our works of fasting, almsgiving, prayer and suffering share in the work

The design. The Good Shepherd — the Good Host.

of Christ who lends them the values of His own suffering and sacrifice, yet we keenly feel the absence of *Alleluia*, much as fasting makes us the more conscious of food. *Alleluia* is the fruit of Lent, the *munus paenitentiae*, and there is more truth than humor in the story that a certain penitent received "one devout *Alleluia* for a penance."

In a sense, *Alleluia* is not learned, but is the spontaneous reaction of the redeemed soul to penance. What St. Paul writes in 2 Cor. 7:9f. applies here: "Now I am glad, not because you were made sorry, but because your sorrow led you to repentance. For you were made sorry according to God. . . . For the sorrow that is according to God produces repentance that surely tends to salvation." Of old, God promised it would be so. "For behold I create Jerusalem a rejoicing and the people thereof joy. And I (Yahweh) will rejoice in Jerusalem and joy in My people and the voice of weeping shall no more be heard in her, nor the voice of crying" (Is. 65:17–19). Of course, the perfect fulfilment of this will be in the heavenly Jerusalem of which Tobias sings: "All its streets shall be paved with white and clean stones and *Alleluia* shall be sung in its streets" (Tob. 13:12f).

During our lifetime the joy that is according to God is not unrestrained. If our joy is full, it is only as full as our limited measure and capacity allow. That is the paradox of *Alleluia*. Christ foretold it. "What is this that He saith: *modicum*? And He said to them: Amen, amen, I say to you, that you shall lament and weep, but the world shall rejoice, and you shall be made sorrowful, but your sorrow shall be turned into joy. I will see you again and your heart shall rejoice and your joy no man shall take from you" (Gospel, third Sunday). *Modicum* means "a little while, a little bit." Suffering and penance look small in the vision of Tabor and Easter. There must be suffering, but the prospect that "in a little while you shall see Me" makes it entirely bearable. "The (Easter) joy that a man is born into the world" reduces it to a minimum.

Nothing is perfect here below, not even the *Alleluia-jubilus*.

Because of the duality of things, the causes of sadness continue to threaten us: passion, concupiscence, actual sin; sometimes even physical evils like sickness, poverty, bitter worry, dampen our joy. Also, we remember the price that Christ paid for our joy, how "He reigned from the Cross." "Why is Thy garment red?" Because of blood, death and the grave. And Christian legend has it that Peter continued to weep for his denial until the end of his life. The exact place of our *Alleluia*, then, is between the first and second coming of Christ. During Eastertide it prevails because Christian joy is founded on patience and the inner power to bear suffering.

We have seen the spread of *Alleluia* from the East and Easter to the West and the rest of the year. History records further spontaneous extensions from the liturgy into "private life." The second century martyrs Felix, Fortunatus, and Achilles sang *Alleluia* in the midst of their tortures. An ancient house bore over the entrance the inscription: IXTHYS ALELOUIA. In Spain there was a monastery called *Alleluia*. St. Jerome writes that farmers and shepherds whistled it, lovers sang it and children learned it with their ABC's. What a full echo of the liturgy in the home and public life! If we have the right attitude towards sin, then our interior life will reflect Christ's glorious victory: bitterness will vanish and *Alleluia* will replace it as a constantly hummed aspiration.

SATURDAY OF THE SECOND WEEK AFTER EASTER

1. Scripture Reading (Acts 28:16–31). Today we read St. Luke's graphic description of Paul's eventful voyage to Rome, termed a miniature Odyssey by a certain writer. On the way he suffered shipwreck, although the boat was a coastwise merchant vessel. Through Paul's prayer, however, all arrived safely at the island of Malta. There they were received in a very friendly man-

ner, and Paul healed all those who were sick. Richly laden with gifts, they left the hospitable shores and finally reached Rome, where the apostle was kept in protective custody. He was allowed to rent a home and could go where he pleased, always accompanied, of course, by a soldier.

Three days after arriving he called together the chief Jews and explained his position. Shortly thereafter they came to listen in still greater numbers. He preached to them from morning to evening about the kingdom of God, endeavoring "to convince them concerning Jesus from the Law of Moses and from the prophets." Some believed his words, others did not. "For two years he remained in his own hired lodging; and he welcomed all who came to him, preaching the kingdom of God and teaching about the Lord Jesus Christ with all boldness and unhindered."

With these words the Acts of the Apostles comes to a close. It is a book which affords us many valuable insights into the life of the ancient Church, and into the personalities of Peter and Paul. Its perusal would enrich our hearts and minds immeasurably.

2. ALLELUIA and Parousia. The chant of *Alleluia* goes on and on, until its dying echo becomes the signal for a new beginning in heaven. *Kyrie eleison* will come to an end with the parousia of glory, but never the *Alleluia* or *Amen*. Apoc. 19:1–8 proves that. This famous passage is a summary of all we know

about the *Alleluia*: it is a liturgical acclamation of a great crowd singing in unison and forms the keynote of heaven's eucharistic worship; it expresses praise, victory, judgment, joy and gratitude over God's reign, the marriage of the Lamb and the beauty of His Spouse.

> After these things I heard as it were a loud voice of a great crowd in heaven saying: "Alleluia! Salvation and glory and power belong to our God. For true and just are His judgments, who has judged the great harlot who corrupted the earth with her fornication, and has avenged the blood of His servants at her hands." And again they have said: "Alleluia! And the smoke of her goes up forever and ever!" And the twenty-four elders and the four living creatures fell down and worshipped God who sits on the throne, and they say: "Amen! Alleluia!" And a voice came forth from the throne saying: "Praise our God, all you His servants, and you who fear Him, the small and the great!" And I heard as it were a voice of a great crowd, and as a voice of many waters, and as a voice of mighty thunders saying: "Alleluia! For the Lord our God almighty now reigns! Let us be glad and rejoice and give glory to Him; for the marriage of the Lamb has come, and His Spouse has prepared herself. And she has been permitted to clothe herself in fine linen, shining bright. For the fine linen is the just deeds of the saints."

On earth and in heaven *Alleluia* is the song of the redeemed. "Our citizenship is in heaven, from which also we eagerly await a Savior, our Lord Jesus Christ" (Phil. 3:20). Now our *jubilus* is measured and audible, with syllables and neums, a partial expression and symbol of the Mystery we carry veiled; then we will "sing with the spirit," without words, the sheer joy of rapture in the face of God. The joy of the blessed is full (1 Cor. 2:9). Meanwhile, while we await our ascension, we celebrate the paschal Mysteries in hope, as a pledge of our second resurrection.

Coming from God the *Alleluia* leads us back to God by a divine circuit. Never translated, it yet remains intelligible to our spirit because we have the Holy Spirit. St. Augustine calls our

Alleluia-melody an image of the chant without end: "Let us say Alleluia now as often as possible, that we may say it forever. In heaven our food will be Alleluia, our drink Alleluia, our act of contemplation Alleluia, our total joy will be Alleluia, that is, the praise of God" (Sermon 252, 9).

In conclusion, let us recall that *Kyrie eleison* is our longing for the coming of Christ, *Amen* our lenten acceptance of God's way of redemption, and *Alleluia* the fruition of our new life in Christ. All three prayers come from God, having their roots buried in the Old Testament, and flowering out in the New Covenant and Christ's liturgy. And the liturgy is also our work, our worship of God. That spells apostolate.

Millions of Christians never sing *Alleluia* (or, perhaps, anything else that is sacred). Yet the only adequate expression of our Easter experience is sacred song. Easter is the ultimate reason for all solemnity, even for singing our Christmas hymns. The liturgy by an inner urge tends to solemnity because Christ glorified and triumphant stands at its heart and center. Let us, therefore, meditate our Christian truths until we spontaneously sing the *Alleluia*, and let us be zealous also to help the man in the pew to his rightful expression of *Alleluia*.

If we would sing and get others to sing, the Day of the Lord would not be a mere "day of obligation" but a day of joy. And then people would be led to the high Mass instead of being driven. If we measure the liturgical spirit by the amount and kind of singing in our country, we might well conclude that there is no liturgical movement. That movement must start from God and within us, from the joy of Easter. Yet the obstacles are not too great. To shrink from them would be a sign of sadness and lack of fortitude. Joy and fortitude overcome obstacles and our mission is to let the joy of Easter triumph over a sad world.

"If I forget thee, O Jerusalem, let my right hand be forgotten; let my tongue cleave to my jaws, if I do not remember thee; if I make not Jerusalem the beginning of my joy" (Ps. 136:5f). The same holds true of *Alleluia,* the keynote of joy in the City of God.

NEW ORIENTATION

An analysis of the liturgy during these seven weeks after Easter furnishes grounds for dividing the season into two sections. The first continues themes proper to the feast of Easter itself (viz., resurrection, baptism, Eucharist) and extends to the second Sunday after Easter. Thereupon follows the second section, oriented toward the coming mysteries. During the latter Mother Church prepares us for two more events that are closely connected with our salvation: the ascension of Jesus, and the descent of the Holy Spirit.

These two mysteries will be singled out for emphasis on the coming Sundays. Christ is proceeding to found His kingdom on earth, a spiritual kingdom. Therefore it becomes necessary for Him to leave this earth and make heaven His home. His followers must not attach themselves to His physical person; they must spiritualize their affections. That is why Jesus sent the Holy Spirit, the Advocate, to take His place and to guide and comfort His followers. To spiritualize human activity is therefore the Church's chief concern during these weeks after Easter, with the climax coming on Pentecost.

Nevertheless, this does not prevent the liturgy from stressing realistic approaches to the problems of life. In so doing the Church seeks to detach us from the perceptible joys of Easter and introduce us into the real world of strife and daily conflict. Together with the newly baptized, we beheld our Redeemer in His great mysteries at Easter. But before eight days had passed the Church took the white robes from the neophytes and sent them back into the world. They had become of age spiritually, ready to meet the problems of life. On each succeeding Sunday the liturgy confronted us squarely with the practical affairs of daily living.

Saturday evening is already a part of Sunday. That is why we generally sing an antiphon from Sunday's Gospel at the Magnificat. Today, for instance: "A little while and you shall not see Me, says the Lord; and again a little while and you shall see Me, because I go to the Father, alleluia, alleluia."

THIRD SUNDAY AFTER EASTER

Yet a little while

Three weeks have passed since the glorious feast of Easter. During this time holy Mother Church centered her affection and attention on the resurrection of the Savior. Each day during the first week we met Christ in one of those beautiful apparitions described in the Gospels. On Low Sunday, together with Thomas, we saw Him and touched His glorified wounds. Last Sunday we flocked round our Good Shepherd who at Easter called us back into His fold and now leads us into the verdant pastures of His holy mysteries. Up to this moment, therefore, the Church centered the attention of eye, ear, and mind on the risen Redeemer.

Beginning this Sunday she divides her attention, directing her gaze likewise to the mystery of Redemption in its final phase — with reference to Christ and to ourselves. Today, therefore, for the first time is there mention of Christ's ascension into heaven. Note how clearly it is put in the Gospel, "A little while and you shall not see Me . . . because I go to the Father." These words, however, do not imply that the Church will be sad and mournful because her Spouse is leaving. No, the joy of Easter does not diminish, rather it increases. Look at the very first words of the Mass: "Shout joyously to God, all the earth, alleluia; sing the glory of His Name, alleluia; render Him glorious praise, alleluia, alleluia."

These sentiments would not arise from a heavy heart, such as the apostles have in today's Gospel. The Church is happy beholding her Savior ascending to heaven, because her own home is not on earth; heaven is her true home and she yearns to follow her Spouse as soon as possible. The Head leads, the members and the body follow. This brings us to the second point, what the future holds in store for us. When we were celebrating Easter, we felt as though we were in heaven. With Peter we could have exclaimed: "Lord, it is good for us to be here. Let us set up our

tents here." It seemed as if we had forgotten our earthly existence. But now in clear and forceful words the Church reminds us and the newly baptized that a Christian's life is hard and difficult, a life filled with sufferings, struggle, and trial. We are still on pilgrimage to a heavenly home.

1. **Holy Mass (Jubilate).** "Cross on earth, crown in heaven!" This proverb expresses well the spirit of today's well coordinated Mass formulary. Joy, therefore, and the praise of God is the predominating mood, as indicated immediately by the Introit. Alleluia is its key word, not an extraneous appendage; this is easily seen if the wording is rearranged as follows:

> "All nations, shout joyously to God: Alleluia
> Sing this song to His Name: Alleluia.
> Honor Him with words of praise: Alleluia, alleluia."

The *Oration* reminds us of the days when we all were wandering in the darkness of sin; then at Easter God showed us the light of His truth. It is now our duty to remain on the path of righteousness. In baptism we received the name "Christ"-ian! This name, this nobility obliges us to lead a holy and worthy life.

The *Epistle*, another message from St. Peter, describes the Christian as a "stranger and pilgrim" on earth. Because his fatherland is heaven, the world remains foreign to him; and for the same reason he refrains from worldly profit and pleasures. Living among the children of the world, he walks the path of righteousness. His actions are silent, eloquent sermons that frequently prove most powerful as incentives unto moral improvement. Gladly he obeys the government, an instrument of God. The apostle concludes with four brief rules for earth's pilgrim:

> Be on good terms with everyone.
> Show special love toward members of the (Christian) community.
> Maintain a childlike reverence toward God.
> Honor the king.

These words summarize the duties we have toward our fellow men. The *Alleluia* points out again how Christ is our model, "It was necessary for Christ to suffer and to rise again from the dead and thus enter into His glory." That this holds for us too is shown in the *Gospel*. The "little while" of the Gospel harmonizes well with the "pilgrim" theme of the Epistle. The passage is taken from Jesus' farewell sermon to the apostles at the Last Supper; here it is addressed to us as His farewell sermon before the ascension. As I hear these beautiful words the thought should come spontaneously: My Savior is leaving, these are His farewell words to me.

Let us reflect somewhat at length on these words, and isolate their mystical import. Likewise in our lives there are two "whiles", bringing the same experience to us as to the apostles. "A little while, and you shall not see Me" — this may well refer

Our journey through life is the theme of the above illustration. The Church (or the soul) stands in a little boat on the stormy sea. The light of Christ beams down from above. Because God gave us this light at baptism, the Church holds high a lamp to enkindle it repeatedly from the rays of the divine sun (the Eucharist). She steers her course prudently, her light shows the way and the final port — she cannot go wrong. That the journey will continue only "a little while" is her anchor of hope; and she casts it not into the deep, but into heaven on high. This "little while — *Modicum*" is personified as a comforting angel, a messenger from heaven. In his hands is the Gospel. The divine Dove too is a messenger from the Bridegroom; in its beak is the olive branch of peace, joy, and consolation.

to our earthly sojourn during which our Lord is not present visibly. "You shall lament and weep, but the world shall rejoice." Life on earth, for the most part, holds but tears and toil with many misfortunes for the children of God. They are regarded with contempt by "the wise of this world," who pass their lives in a whirl of pleasure and boisterous gaiety.

Now it is most consoling to realize that this earthly life will last only for "a little while" and then suddenly will come the second "while" when "you shall see Me again . . . and your heart shall rejoice, and your joy no one shall take from you." Yes, when we die the glorified Savior will suddenly stand before us; all suffering will be forgotten, for we will be standing on the threshold of everlasting joy. The words "a little while" have become a treasured phrase to Christian hearts; in loving repartee it passes back and forth between Savior and disciple, acting as a charm on souls longing for union with their Spouse.

With a hymn of praise on our lips we approach the altar, and under the symbol of an Offertory gift we unite the sorrow of our "little while" with the Sacrifice of Christ. Echoing the Epistle, the *Secret* requests that the fruit of this Sacrifice "quiet our earthly desires and develop a love for heavenly things"; evidently the Church wants us to take very seriously St. Peter's Epistle message. For the *Communion* we chant the "little while" passage from the Gospel, now adorned with Alleluias. The Eucharist is our viaticum during the "little while" of this earthly pilgrimage and likewise the pledge of heavenly reunion in the second "while" hereafter. "May the Eucharist be lifegiving nourishment for the soul and a means of protection for the body" (*Postc.*).

2. **Divine Office.** In Matins today St. Augustine speaks of the "resurrection of the body," a timely and important topic in the present season. "During these holy days dedicated to the Lord's resurrection, we intend with His assistance to discourse upon the resurrection of the body. For this is indeed a dogma of our faith; in the flesh of our Lord Jesus the gift of resurrection

has been promised to us, and what we hope for has been realized in Him beforehand. For He wished not merely to predict but to demonstrate concretely that which He spoke about during the last days of His earthly life.

"Recall how His disciples shrank away in fear when they saw Him, supposing that they had seen a ghost, until they grasped and touched His firm flesh. He spoke to them not merely in audible words, in a visible form He appeared to their eyes; nor did He stop with this — He even yielded Himself to them to be handled and touched. And He said to them: Why are you troubled and why do thoughts arise in your hearts? For they believed it was a ghost before them. Why are you troubled, He asked, and why do thoughts arise in your hearts? See My hands and My feet; handle and see — a ghost does not have flesh and bones as you see that I have.

"But as men they disputed the evidence. For what else can men do, men who perceive only the things of men, but dispute about God, even against God's own word? He is God, they are man. But God knows the thoughts of men that they are vain. To carnal men daily experience is the one rule that determines what they should accept as true. The commonplace they believe, the unusual they do not. But God works miracles outside of the ordinary course of things because He is God. It is indeed a far greater miracle that daily many persons are born who did not exist, than that a few who did exist should be raised from the dead. And yet these miracles go unnoticed; why, they are even regarded as commonplace because of their frequency!

"Christ rose again; that is a fact. He had a body, a body of flesh. He hung upon the Cross, He gave up His spirit, His body was laid in a tomb. He who dwelt in that body showed it to others alive. Why do we wonder? Why do we not believe? It is God who accomplished it. Remember who is the ultimate Cause, and banish all doubt."

In the third nocturn the same holy doctor explains what is meant by "little while." "The little while is the whole fleeting

era of earthly life." The words, "Again a little while and you shall see Me," are addressed to all the members of the Church. At present this "little while" seems long. But when it has once passed by, we will realize how brief it actually was.

3. **Scripture Reading (Apoc. 1:1–20).** This week's Scripture reading is an excellent supplement to the Sunday's principal theme, "Strangers on Earth." Written by the apostle John, the Apocalypse or The Book of Revelation is a treatise guiding us to our heavenly home (the responsories for the coming days show this clearly). It is the only prophetical book of the New Testament. Its main topics are the Church's struggle until Christ's return and the last judgment.

Composed on the island of Patmos, the message of the Book of the Apocalypse is one of consolation and encouragement for the universal Church, for Christians of all times and ages. The apostle vindicates and confirms Christ's promise, "The gates of hell shall not prevail against her." The Apocalypse gives world history from the vantage point of heaven. Each year we should set aside this particular week for reading and reflecting upon this magnificent conclusion to God's inspired books.

4. **Songs of our Heavenly Homeland.** Today's Mass characterizes the children of God as pilgrims or strangers on earth; the Scripture reading describes our true fatherland, while a series of beautiful responsories present the Church, likewise our home, under the figures of a fruitful vine, a bride, and the heavenly Jerusalem.

As the vine I produced a pleasant odor, alleluia.
Come to me, all you who desire me, and be filled
with my fruits, alleluia, alleluia.
All graces for true moral living are mine,
Mine too all hope for life and virtue.

Your streets, Jerusalem, shall be paved with pure
gold, alleluia.
In them men shall sing the joyful song: Alleluia.

In your every quarter shall arise a common shout:
Alleluia, alleluia.
You shall appear radiant with glorious light while
all the ends of the earth shall honor you.

One of the seven angels spoke to me, saying:
Come, I will show you the new bride, the spouse
of the Lamb.
And I saw Jerusalem coming down from heaven,
adorned with jewels, alleluia, alleluia, alleluia.

5. **A Message, a Challenge, and Grace.** Every feast, every Sunday in fact, greets us with a) the revelation of a truth, b) special grace, and c) a challenge. Truth and grace come from God; man should correspond by meeting the challenge.

a) What is today's message? It is one that includes both sad and joyful elements. Christ reveals it in the Gospel, and we must listen to His words as though He Himself were physically present. "Amen, amen, I say to you, that you shall weep and lament, but the world shall rejoice; and you shall be sorrowful, but your sorrow shall be turned into joy . . . and your joy no one shall take from you." Such the message. The bitter portion is Christ's promise that His followers must endure suffering and sorrow on earth, while men who live only for this world prosper in peace. The worldling will possess the earth; Christians will be beggars, slaves, step-children during their earthly pilgrimage.

This message is not a new one to us, it occurs repeatedly in the Gospel: "He who does not hate father and mother . . . cannot be My disciple. . . . Blessed are the poor, the hungry, the sorrowful, the persecuted" (Luke 6:20ff). This is the harsh truth that we must meet and master. But it is no goal or end; rather, a stage that is very transitory. The goal is everlasting joy. Develop a strong faith, therefore, in the blessed message of unceasing happiness in your heavenly home.

b) The Church not only provides truth for the mind, she likewise confronts our wills with a challenge. Today this chal-

lenge, found in the Epistle, is logically related to the Gospel's message. For if this earth is a vale of tears, if only in heaven unceasing happiness will be ours, then it is obvious that we must detach our affections from the things of earth. We must never feel wholly at ease nor seek to build permanent homes in this world For we are pilgrims, aliens, as St. Peter says so clearly. Precisely this is the challenge thrown out to us, one that must ultimately change our entire mode of life.

Christ demands a *metanoia*, i.e., a radical change of outlook. Our sense of values must be attuned to heavenly standards, not to ephemeral norms. He who has no other home than earth will devote his time and energy to making money; he will seek honors and strive for power, ease and comfort will be his primary objectives; the cup of pleasure he will drink to the dregs. Such individuals Paul had in mind as he wrote, weeping: "Their end is ruin, their god is the belly." But he who regards himself an alien, lays up no earthly reserves, his treasures are earmarked for eternity.

There is a striking passage in First Corinthians which suddenly becomes clear: "But this I say, brethren, the time is short; it remains that those who have wives be as if they had none; and those who weep, as though not weeping; and those who rejoice, as though not rejoicing; and those who buy, as though not possessing; and those who use this world, as though not using it, for this world as we see it is passing away" (1 Cor. 7:29ff). What steps will you take to meet today's challenge?

c) It would be a fatal illusion to imagine that this task is easy. In fact, it would be impossible for one who relied solely on his own strength. Which brings us to our third point, divine grace. To be a means of grace is the liturgy's noblest prerogative. For the liturgy does not merely fill the mind with truths or rest content with rousing the will; the liturgy also provides the needed grace and strength to translate such truths and exhortations into action. The grace proper to this Sunday should enlighen our understanding and enable it to accept the message of faith; and it should move the will to meet the challenge involved. That we

accept the truths proposed is the result of grace working in our souls.

It is the unbeliever who will retort, "What guarantee do I have that a future life will bring me happiness? The sparrow (present joy) in my hand is worth two (future happiness) in the bush." That *I* reject such a worldly outlook is due to God's grace. It is also due to His grace that my will becomes humble enough to accept the lowly status of stranger and pilgrim. How the world with its treasures and pleasures seeks to lure us away! "All these things I will give you, if you will fall down and worship me." To such an invitation there is but one reply: "Begone, Satan."

Grace gives the courage to make this reply, the grace that comes in fullest measure in holy Mass. At the Offertory we place our willingness to believe and to obey upon the altar; Christ sanctifies our gifts, makes them part of His own self-immolation. And the fruit of this offering is a life in closest union with Christ.

MONDAY OF THE THIRD WEEK AFTER EASTER

1. **Antiphons.** In the morning we sing of the risen Christ: "And beginning with Moses and with all the prophets, He interpreted to them in all the Scriptures the things referring to Himself, alleluia" (Ben. Ant.). In the evening Christ says consolingly: "Your sorrow shall be turned into joy, alleluia; and your joy no one shall take from you, alleluia" (Magn. Ant.). In this manner the Church teaches us to live with the risen Savior throughout the day.

2. **Scripture Reading (Apoc. 2:1 — 3:22).** The seven letters at the beginning of the Apocalypse are so many beautiful en-

trances into the Book of Revelation. These letters were written to the bishops of seven communities in Asia Minor, a kind of visitation undertaken by Christ, the divine Bishop. Even though the letters were composed against the background of local circumstances, they have, as does everything else in Holy Writ, a universal appeal and application because they portray various phases or facets of Christian life. In them, therefore, Christ addresses to us words of praise, of criticism, and of exhortation. Each day during the coming week He sends us one of these letters.

As to content the letters follow a symmetrical and unified plan. Almost all of them fall easily into five parts: a) an introduction presents Christ in one of His attributes depicted in the initial vision (1:12–20); b) a word of praise introduced by "I know." This "I know" is to be understood in the absolute sense because Jesus can fathom my innermost being (John 2:23); c) a rebuke (note the procedure: first praise, then rebuke); d) a warning for the future; e) finally, a promise of reward. The Holy Spirit will bless him who by conquering has become a true and tried member of the Church militant.

In our comments here we will omit exegetical problems peculiar to these letters, devoting our time to practical spiritual considerations. The first letter is addressed to the bishop of Ephesus.

a) Christ, the Head of the Church, is writing to me. In His right hand He holds those who rule in His stead, He is present in the midst of all His followers. He also directs and assists me, and accompanies me wherever I am.

b) He "knows" me, nothing is hidden from His penetrating glance. What does He behold in me? Labors, trials, sufferings. These fruits will abide, they are the wheat stored in heavenly granaries. Other things in my life may be far more glittering, but they are largely chaff. To work in His service, to bear trials and suffer persecution — these are pastoral tasks which the layman can also perform. How much of this does Christ see in me?

c) He rebukes me because I have forsaken my "first love." The figure of the bride and bridegroom is most appropriate. What was my relationship to Christ at the time of my "first

love," and what is it now after some years? Most priests will feel the cut of conscience in this observation. One's first years of priestly labors are marked by a burning love and enthusiasm, a zeal for souls. Is that high degree of fervor still present now after ten, twenty, or thirty years? The author of the *Imitation of Christ* already voiced the complaint that at the beginning of our conversion we were more holy and pure than we are now! Daily we should become more zealous, more spiritual; yet it is accounted noteworthy if only a shred of our "first love" remains!

d) The warning. I have fallen from the spiritual heights and I must admit it. But one road remains, viz., that of *metanoia* — return to my "first works." If I refuse, the Lord "will come and move my candlestick out of its place." This visitation would be particularly dreadful for me since my candlestick stands so close to Christ in His holy temple.

e) And finally a promise from the Holy Spirit. He who triumphs will eat of the tree of life in paradise, i.e., his life will be rich in grace and glory. Am I winning the battle for Christ? The entire letter is a sermon directed against my lukewarmness.

TUESDAY OF THE THIRD WEEK AFTER EASTER

1. Antiphons. At dawn: "And they urged Him, saying: Stay with us, Lord, for it is getting towards evening, alleluia" (Ben. Ant.). At sunset: "Sorrow has filled your hearts, but your joy no one shall take from you, alleluia, alleluia" (Magn. Ant.).

2. Scripture Reading (Apoc. 4:1–37). The first three chapters (the introduction and the seven letters) constituted the preamble to the Apocalypse. In this section St. John described "what is," i.e., the state of the Church at the time of writing. Then

I know Mine and Mine know Me

the apostle continues with a series of revelations about future events ("What must come to pass hereafter"). With chapter four he directs our gaze into heaven: "And behold, there was a throne set in heaven, and upon the throne One was sitting. And He who sat was in appearance like to a jasper-stone and a sardius, and there was a rainbow round about the throne, in appearance like to an emerald.

"And round about the throne are twenty-four seats; and upon the seats twenty-four elders sitting, clothed in white garments, and on their heads crowns of gold. And from the throne proceed flashes of lightning, rumblings, and peals of thunder; and there are seven lamps burning before the throne, which are the seven spirits of God. And before the throne there is, as it were, a sea of glass like to crystal, and in the midst of the throne, and round the throne, are four living creatures, full of eyes before and behind. And the first living creature is like a lion and the second like a calf, and the third has the face, as it were, of a man, and the fourth is like an eagle flying. And the four living creatures have each of them six wings; round about and within they are full of eyes. And they do not rest day and night, saying: Holy, holy, holy, the Lord God almighty, who was, and who is, and who is coming.

"And when those living creatures give glory and honor and benediction to him who sits on the throne, who lives forever and ever, the twenty-four elders will fall down before Him who sits upon the throne, and will worship Him who lives forever and ever, and will cast their crowns before the throne, saying: You are worthy, O Lord our God, to receive glory and honor and power; for You have created all things, and because of Your will they existed, and were created."

It is a magnificent, awesome scene. The twenty-four elders represent God's kingdom on earth (the twelve tribes of Israel — the twelve apostles); their white robes and golden crowns indicate that they are both kings and priests. The four living creatures are the cherubim who embody created life in all its fullness. When they pray *Sanctus*, the elders fall to their knees and

lay their crowns before the throne. The chapter, then, has as its theme the adoration of God in heaven.

3. The Second Letter (Apoc. 2:8—11). At the time that St. John wrote, St. Polycarp was bishop of Smyrna. (Read the authentic Acts of this saint's martyrdom if you have access to them.) He was an illustrious bishop and martyr of the immediate post-apostolic era; the letter therefore contains no words of reproach.

a) The message comes from Christ, the "First and the Last," i.e., the Source from which all things take their beginning as well as the Goal or End of all creation. He "was dead and is alive," for although He suffered and died, He nevertheless is the Origin of all life. He alone can save His own from the "second death" of hell and give them eternal life. See how these letters teach us the real inner nature of Christ.

b) Christ recognizes two glorious virtues in Polycarp, suffering and poverty. In his person the saint fulfills the two beatitudes of the Sermon on the Mount: Blessed are the poor — Blessed are they who suffer persecution. His poverty, however, is superficial; actually he is very rich. There are many Christians today to whom Christ could address similar words, particularly in Russia and Iron Curtain countries. But I must blush for shame! How I dread suffering, how I flee from poverty! How concerned I am about my hourly pay!

c) Christ gives no rebuke in this letter. But my conscience reproaches me.

d) The warning. Difficult times are in store for the Church. Persecution is, indeed, the work of Satan, but a work by which unwittingly he renders the Church highest service. I likewise must be prepared to suffer. Christ bids me to fear nothing. "Be faithful unto death and I will give you the crown of life." Frequently repeat these consoling words so full of sacramental power. From this letter flow the graces of fidelity and perseverance.

e) The Holy Spirit assures me, "He who overcomes shall not be hurt by the second death"; i.e., the victor will follow in Christ's footsteps and enjoy life, life in all its fullness.

It must become habitual with us to listen to the words of Holy Scripture, and permit them to re-echo long in heart and mind, in intellect and will. Because they produce their effect like a sacramental, a perfect understanding of the text is not required. Rather the words of God should be applied to our wounds like oil and wine, they should be balm for the soul — as well as a two-edged sword.

WEDNESDAY OF THE THIRD WEEK AFTER EASTER

1. **Antiphons.** "Abide with us, for it is towards evening, and the day is now far spent, alleluia" (Ben. Ant.). "Your sorrow, alleluia, shall be turned to joy, alleluia" (Magn. Ant.). In the morning the Church recalls the memorable scene at Emmaus, in the evening words from the Sunday Gospel.

2. **Scripture Reading (Apoc. 5:1–14).** The vision begun in chapter four continues. A "scroll written within and without" is seen in God's right hand. This scroll contains the divine decrees on man's redemption, the future fate of God's kingdom on earth. As the action proceeds, a Lamb "as if slain" appears "having seven horns and seven eyes." The Lamb is Christ, who was immolated but is now glorified. The horns symbolize the Holy Spirit and His sevenfold gifts. The Lamb takes the scroll out of the hand of God, for He alone is worthy to open its seals. Thereupon follows a stirring scene in which the entire heavenly choir join in adoring the Lamb. "And when He had opened the

scroll, the four living creatures and the twenty-four elders fell down before the Lamb, having each a harp and golden bowls full of incense, which are the prayers of the saints.

And they sing a new canticle, saying,
You are worthy to take the scroll and to open its seals;
For You were slain and You have redeemed us for God,
with Your blood,
Out of every tribe and tongue and people and nation,
And You have made them for our God a kingdom of
priests,
And they shall reign over the earth.

And I beheld, and I heard a voice of many angels round about the throne, and the living creatures and the elders, and the number of them was thousands of thousands, saying with a loud voice,

Worthy is the Lamb who was slain
to receive power and divinity
and wisdom and strength
and honor and glory and blessing.

And every creature that is in heaven and on the earth and under the earth, and such as are on the sea, and all that are in them, I heard them all saying,

To Him who sits upon the throne, and to the Lamb,
blessing and honor and glory and dominion,
forever and ever.

And the four living creatures said: Amen; and the elders fell down and worshiped Him who lives forever and ever."

Few would hesitate to include this passage among the most beautiful in Holy Scripture.

3. The Third Letter (Apoc. 2:12–17). This letter is addressed to the bishop of Pergamum. It was a difficult post, this city a center of idol worship. Here was the famous shrine to Aesculepius, the god of medicine. With an eye on the patient's pocketbook, priests were always present to offer special prayers for speedy recuperation. For a tenacious passion of greed quickly develops when religion leaves room for gain. Certainly this made the position of the bishop of Pergamum doubly difficult. These observations help clarify the historical background; now we shall endeavor to make the letter's contents personal.

a) Christ introduces Himself as the One who has the sharp "two-edged sword," i.e., His divine word has power and grace. In a memorable passage St. Paul says: "The word of God is living and efficient, and keener than any two-edged sword; and extending even to the division of soul and spirit, of joints also and of marrow, and a discerner of the thoughts and intentions of the heart" (Heb. 4:12). In the Gospels Christ often speaks of His life-giving word. I must endeavor to realize more vividly the sacramental power of His utterances.

b) In spite of difficult circumstances and the irreligious and anti-Christian nature of your surroundings, you have remained true to Christ and to your faith; even in the most trying times you have professed your religion. These words Christ addresses to me. Can I accept them as praise for myself?

c) There is also a rebuke, a slight one. "But I have a few things against you." Because of your position you have a responsibility toward those under your care. As father or mother, as an official, an employer, teacher or pastor, it is your duty to watch over the morals and mode of life of your children, subjects, employees, students. Woe to you if you fail to exercise the necessary care and watchfulness.

d) As a warning Christ tells me that if I fail, His blessing and words of grace will become an avenging sword.

e) Three gifts are promised to those who open wide their ears to hear the words of Christ and the Holy Spirit. They will receive hidden manna, a white pebble, and a new name. These figures are obscure to us, but their specific meaning is not too important. We may assume that they represent some present blessing that will continue in the life to come. Manna is food for the supernatural life of grace and glory. The white pebble and the new name probably refer to our rights of citizenship in God's kingdom on earth and in heaven. In either case my name is written in the Book of Life. In this letter Christ imposes upon me the obligation of believing in Him and of caring for the spiritual well-being of those entrusted to my care.

THURSDAY OF THE THIRD WEEK AFTER EASTER

1. Antiphons. In company with the Emmaus disciples we hasten to church early in the morning; there the risen Christ blesses and breaks bread with us. "He went in with them, and it came to pass as He sat at table with them that He took bread, and blessed it, and broke it, and gave it to them, alleluia, alleluia" (Ben. Ant.). In the evening Jesus consoles us with the words: "Amen, amen, I say to you, I will see you again and your heart shall rejoice, and your joy no one shall take from you, alleluia." Guided by the Church, we thus translate the Gospel into present day action.

2. Scripture Reading (Apoc. 15:1 — 18:24). Yesterday we read chapter five, today fifteen and sixteen. The intervening chapters describe the opening of the seven seals. The opening of the scroll and the seven seals represents the completion in time of Christ's work of redemption, while the wicked receive due punishment.

With chapter twelve the second part of the book begins. Here we see how anti-Christian powers exert their might for a time but are finally conquered. Satan is visualized as a dragon, anti-Christ takes the form of a beast rising out of the sea; earthly powers hostile to God are represented as Babylon, a harlot upon a scarlet beast. "And there came one of the seven angels who had the seven bowls, and he spoke with me, saying: Come, I will show you the condemnation of the great harlot who sits upon many waters, with whom the kings of the earth have

committed fornication, and the inhabitants of the earth were made drunk with the wine of her immorality.

"And he took me away in spirit into a desert. And I saw a woman sitting upon a scarlet-colored beast, full of names of blasphemy, having seven heads and ten horns. And the woman was clothed in purple and scarlet, and covered with gold and precious stones and pearls, having in her hand a golden cup full of abominations and the uncleanness of her immorality. And upon her forehead a name written — a mystery — Babylon the great, the mother of the harlotries and of the abominations of the earth. And I saw the woman drunk with the blood of the saints and with the blood of the martyrs of Jesus. And when I saw her, I wondered with a great wonder" (Apoc. 17:1–6).

3. **The Fourth Letter (Apoc. 2:18–29)** is addressed to the bishop of Thyatira. a) Christ introduces Himself as "the Son of God, who has eyes like to a flame of fire and whose feet are like fine brass," i.e., He is omniscient and invincible. We too should picture Christ in His purely divine attributes. His eyes pierce my thoughts and wishes, and His "feet of brass" make deep imprints on my life.

b) With words of high praise, He tells you that He knows "your works, your faith, your love, your ministry." These are my principal virtues. But do they really influence my work, my vocation in life? How about my love, the soul of every act? Without love, any deed is "as sounding brass or a tinkling cymbal." Without love the most glorious accomplishments are worthless. And my faith? Christian faith is not like Platonic speculation, it is a power that conquers the world and can move mountains. Faith is the *petra ecclesiae*, the rock foundation of the Church and of the soul. And my service? The word "service" has become so hackneyed by use that we forget its derivation from *servire*, "to serve." Recall Christ's beautiful words: "Even as the Son of Man has not come to be served but to serve, and to give His life as a ransom for many" (Matth. 20:28).

And finally, what special efforts do I make? If a deed is worthwhile, it demands attention, labor, suffering. In his letter Christ

Since the
entire
earth
is steeped in the grace
of God, Christ's victory
meets us at every step

then adds another word of praise, "Your last works . . . are more numerous than the former." This is quite in harmony with nature, for trees bear more fruit each year. The master is more profound and wise than the pupil. But unfortunately this is not always the case in God's kingdom. We are zealous at the beginning of our conversion, then grow lukewarm with advancing years. What is my present status in the matter?

c) The bishop of Thyatira receives a rebuke similar to that given the bishop of Pergamum. He was not sufficiently energetic in prosecuting a sect of free-thinkers who preached freedom of the senses. Those in authority today must fight this same evil.

d) The faithful are exhorted to persevere, because perseverance to the end is absolutely necessary.

e) The promises are related to attributes in the Christ image at the beginning of the letter. If we are victorious in ruling over ourselves, then we will also share in Christ's power to rule, we will receive the "morning star." What this implies specifically remains a mystery. In any case, there is reference here to a child of heaven who will share in Christ's power and glory.

FRIDAY OF THE THIRD WEEK AFTER EASTER

1. **Antiphons.** Daily at dawn the experience at Emmaus becomes ours: "They recognized the Lord Jesus, alleluia, in the breaking of the bread, alleluia" (Ben. Ant.). Since the Saturday Office of the Blessed Virgin no longer begins with Vespers, last Sunday's Magnificat antiphon is repeated today: "Amen, I say to you, you shall weep and lament, but the world shall rejoice. You shall be sorrowful, but your sorrow shall be turned into joy, alleluia."

2. Scripture Reading (Apoc. 19:1–21). As the book nears its end, the prophet again directs our gaze to heaven. This chapter abounds with striking passages as it paints three victory scenes. a) The joy at the judgment pronounced over the harlot. "Alleluia! salvation and glory and power belong to our God. For true and just are His judgments, who has judged the great harlot who corrupted the earth with her fornication, and has avenged the blood of His servants at her hands."

The twenty-four elders endorse and confirm these sentiments with "Amen! Alleluia!"

b) The nuptials of the Lamb. "Let us be glad and rejoice, and give glory to Him; for the marriage of the Lamb has come, and His spouse has prepared herself. And she has been permitted to clothe herself in fine linen, shining bright."

c) In antithesis to this peaceful picture comes one of war. Christ, the conqueror, rides upon a white horse, "clothed in a garment sprinkled with blood. . . . And the armies of heaven, clothed in fine linen, white and pure, were following Him on white horses. And from His mouth goes forth a sharp sword with which to smite the nations. And He will rule them with a rod of iron, and He treads the wine press of the fierce wrath of

God almighty. And He has on His garment and on His thigh a Name written: King of kings and Lord of lords."

3. The Fifth Letter (Apoc. 3:1–6) is addressed to the bishop of Sardis. A bitter letter, it is undoubtedly the most awesome one of all. It contains no word of praise. a) Christ presents Himself as One to whom all power in heaven and on earth is subject. The "seven spirits of God" are the seven gifts of the Holy Ghost; and the seven stars are the leaders of the Church, the bishops.

b) There exists no reason for praise.

c) And the rebuke is overwhelming. Christ sees through everything, no one can deceive Him. "You have the name (i.e., the appearance) of being alive" and seem to have divine life in you; in reality, however, "you are dead." Can anything more terrifying be said of a Christian — and worse still, of a priest or bishop? He stands at the altar, sits in the sanctuary, ascends the pulpit, dispenses, preserves and nourishes life — while he himself is dead! Consequently his words are fruitless; the fruits of this tree are bitter, evil, useless. And yet, what great privileges he enjoys, what great mysteries he performs! Let everyone remember that he who has received more will also have to account for more.

In his rebuke Christ also uses the metaphor of sleep, one frequently found in Holy Scripture. "It is now the hour for us to rise from sleep" (Rom. 13:11). The warning continues with another figure. Like a thief Christ will come suddenly, and for the unfaithful servant this coming will be terrible. Yet a third figure, that of the white robe. In the congregation there are Christians whose baptismal robes remain unsoiled; with Christ they walk in white garments. Thank God that such are to be found even in the most neglected congregations.

d) The promise is directly associated with the figures of the white garment and the Book of Life. The winner receives the white robe of grace and glory, and his name will be entered in the registry of the City of God forever. Christ will confess his name before the Father and His angels.

SATURDAY OF THE THIRD WEEK AFTER EASTER

1. **Antiphon.** The choicest fruit of Christ's Easter victory is the immaculate Mother of God, Mary. Upon her our thoughts are centered in the morning Office. "Queen of heaven, rejoice, alleluia! for He whom you were chosen to bear, alleluia! has risen as He said, alleluia! Pray for us to God, alleluia" (Ben. Ant.).

2. **Scripture Reading (Apoc. 22:1–22).** The prophetic book closes with a grand description of the transfer of the Church into heaven, the heavenly Jerusalem. "And I, John, saw the Holy City, New Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, made ready as a bride adorned for her husband. And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying,

> Behold the dwelling of God with men,
> and He will dwell with them.
> And they will be His people,
> and God Himself will be with them as their God.
> And God will wipe away every tear from their eyes.
> And death shall be no more;
> neither shall there be mourning, nor crying, nor
> pain any more,
> For the former things have passed away. . . .
> Behold, I make all things new!"

The prophecy continues with a description of the heavenly Jerusalem. It is a new paradise, and has the tree of life with "leaves for the healing of the nations." God's servants behold His face forever and bear His Name upon their foreheads. Night is no more; neither torchlight nor sunlight is needed, because the Lord God illumines all. Thus they reign forever and ever. "And the angel said to me: These words are trustworthy and true; and the Lord, the God of the spirits of the prophets, sent His angel to show to His servants what must shortly come to pass. . . . Blessed is he who keeps the words of the prophecy of this book."

The Apocalypse, the last book of Holy Scripture, ends with the yearning cry of the ancient Church: "Come, Lord Jesus!" And Jesus answers: "It is true, I come quickly."

3. The Last Letter (Apoc. 3:14–22). We must omit the sixth letter, even though it contains many worthwhile considerations. The last letter treats the problem of spiritual tepidity, a state of soul that unfortunately occurs all too frequently. The letter, therefore, is of greatest importance. It is to me that Christ speaks in serious and earnest words.

a) The Lord presents Himself in a manner that foreshadows the coming reprimands. He is the Amen, the faithful and true witness; all things that He says, promises or threatens, are truth itself. "The Son of God, Jesus Christ . . . was not now 'yes' and now 'no,' but only 'yes' was in Him. For all the promises of God find their 'yes' in Him; and therefore through Him also rises the 'Amen' to God unto our glory" (2 Cor. 1:19f). He who is Truth Itself hates all indecision, tepidity, self-glorification.

b) There exists no reason for praise, and therefore c) Christ's word is immediately one of rebuke. In the fifth letter the reproach was directed against sin and evil; here, against half-

hearted measures and lukewarmness, "You are neither cold nor hot. I would you were cold or hot. But because you are lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I am about to vomit you out of My mouth." What a startling word picture! How invigorating in the summer is cold spring water, how stimulating in winter is hot coffee! But lukewarm water or tepid coffee are always distasteful. And this is the parallel Christ draws of a lukewarm soul. How unfortunate the tepid Christian, since he is indulging in the grossest deception. While believing himself to be rich, robed in white garments and endowed with seeing eyes, he is forlorn, wretched, poor, blind, naked. No more terrible tragedy could befall him!

Am I perhaps such an individual? If so, there still is hope. He who will not extinguish the faintest glimmer of a wick offers me gold for my riches, white garments for my robes, and salve for my eyes. These treasures I must make my own, the gold of grace and holy love that alone can enrich my soul in the sight of God; the white robe I received at baptism that hereafter will be exchanged for the stole of glory; salve for my soul's eyes so that I might perceive the things of God and thereby transform self-deception into self-knowledge.

See how considerate, how tender Christ is! Lest I picture Him as One who is continually nagging and finding fault, He assures me, "Those whom I *love* I rebuke and chastise." He wants me to show new fervor, make fresh exertions. Then He continues, speaking as a Friend and Lover. He has no desire to judge, He seeks to be my Guest and Bridegroom: "Behold, I stand at the door and knock." How often have I left Him waiting! If I open to Him, He will enter only to share a friendly meal with me. My past tepidity will be forgotten as He effects a closer and more intimate union with me.

d) The winner is promised the rarest privilege. In spite of lukewarmness, I can still achieve spiritual victory. There is reserved for me a share in that royal power and glory which Christ acquired through His Cross and suffering. For just as I participate in the priesthood of Christ, so too do I share in His kingship.

FOURTH WEEK AFTER EASTER

Last Sunday the Church began to prepare us for Christ's return to heaven. Today she proceeds a step further. She alludes not only to the ascension but also to the descent of the Holy Spirit, and indicates that there is a connection between them. Our Savior says expressly that the Holy Spirit will not come unless He leaves the earth. Moreover, the Holy Spirit will take the place of Jesus; He will be the Consoler, the Leader, the Teacher, the Advocate of the Church and of Christendom. There will be a difference, however, in the mode of operation; Jesus fulfilled His mission in a manner visible to all, the Holy Spirit will work invisibly in the Church and in the souls of men.

Saturday evening. Tonight's Vesper antiphon is from tomorrow's Gospel: "I go to Him who sent Me, and no one of you asks Me: Where are You going? Alleluia, alleluia." The Church is preparing us for our Savior's ascension.

FOURTH SUNDAY AFTER EASTER

When the Paraclete comes, the Spirit of Truth . . .

1. **Holy Mass (Cantate).** In word and action the Mass-mystery reveals to us the operation of the Holy Spirit. Again today the Alleluia takes a central position in the *Introit*, "Sing to the Lord the new canticle: Alleluia." The reason follows immediately, "The Lord has done wonderful things." These marvels that God is manifesting to all the world are the fruits of the Holy Spirit's activity in the souls of men.

The *Oration* is directed to the Father, but we can ascribe the realization of our petition to the Holy Spirit. It is He who fuses the faithful into a homogeneous Body, the mystical Christ, and

impresses upon it one will, one love, one longing. This Body has no other objective than to follow Christ whither He has gone. On this surging sea of life, our hearts are anchored in heaven where "true joy" reigns.

The word *desursum* is the key to the *Epistle*. What, after all, is "the best gift, the perfect gift . . . *coming down* from the Father of lights"? The Holy Spirit, in baptism. The Holy Spirit "begot us by the word of truth, that we might be, as it were, the first-fruits of His creatures." This high dignity demands a correspondingly high morality — swiftness to hear, control over speech and impulses to wrath, rejection of all uncleanness and malice. The Holy Spirit likewise acts as a gardener who nurtures the seed of divine truth in the soil of our hearts. He is "the Lord's right hand"; it is the power of His right arm that is responsible for "victory, exaltation, eternal life" (*Allel.*).

The *Gospel* proclaims a double message, Christ's return to

The design. The activity of the Holy Spirit in the garden of the soul. There is the lily of purity, the rose of charity, the palm of righteousness or martyrdom. As Queen and Bride, the Church plays and sings the *Canticum Novum* (the New Canticle), i.e., the Alleluia, on her harp (cf. Intr.).

heaven and the mission of the Paraclete. The third Person of the Blessed Trinity will soon inaugurate His saving work in the world and in the Church. As Guide and Teacher He will continually deepen our insight into the doctrine of Jesus. He will also glorify Christ, the mystical Christ on earth. The holy Eucharist is the means He uses (Gosp.); that which we listen to in the Fore-Mass, we soon experience in reality.

With sentiments of gratitude we begin the *Offertory*, chanting an Easter song: "What great things the Lord has done for my soul, alleluia!" Formerly, when the entire Psalm was sung, these words were repeated after each verse. There is more content to the *Secret* than ordinarily; it echoes the prayer said at the mingling of the wine and water, "Through the sacred exchange proper to this Sacrifice we become sharers in God's own nature," and concludes with the request for grace to put into practice the truths we profess. The prayer, therefore, touches upon the three fundamentals of our holy religion, grace, faith, commandments — deification, creed, morality.

The Gospel verse used for the *Communion* was not selected at random; by it the liturgy seeks to teach us that the Eucharist is the great means or instrument through which the Holy Spirit operates in the world and in the Church. For surely the Eucharist is the fountain bubbling over with every grace. The *Postcommunion*, on the other hand, emphasizes the negative aspects of moral purification and protection from physical and spiritual dangers.

2. Scripture Reading (James 1:1–16). We are indebted to St. James the Less for a very instructive and edifying New Testament book, one, moreover, which is exceptionally easy to understand. It ranks among the oldest in the New Testament, written shortly before the first council of the apostles in Jerusalem. The very person of the author fills us with great respect. He was related to Jesus, he was the first bishop of Jerusalem, and due to many prayers his knees became calloused "like a camel's hoof." The style of his letter is simple, direct, compact; the contents eminently practical. Significant observations and edifying pas-

sages abound. This week offers a splendid opportunity for reading and meditating upon his words, since little else of special import occurs in the liturgy.

The first topic St. James develops is patience. "Esteem it all joy, my brethren, when you fall into various trials, knowing that the trying of your faith begets patience. And let patience have its perfect work, that you may be perfect and entire, lacking nothing."

The apostle continues, commenting on true wisdom, the wisdom that begets virtue. "But if any of you is wanting in wisdom, let him ask it of God, who gives abundantly to all men, and does not reproach; and it will be given to him. But let him ask with faith, without hesitation. For he who hesitates is like a wave of the sea, driven and carried about by the wind. Therefore, let not such a one think that he will receive anything from the Lord, being a double-minded man, unstable in all his ways.

"But let the brother of lowly condition glory in his high estate, and the rich man in his low condition. . . .

"Blessed is the man who endures temptation. . . .

"Let no man say when he is tempted, that he is tempted by God; for God is no tempter to evil, and He Himself tempts no one. But everyone is tempted by being drawn away and enticed by his own passion. . . . Therefore, my beloved brethren, do not err.

"Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of Lights, with whom there is no change, nor shadow of alteration."

3. Patience. This week the Church focuses our attention upon patience as the virtue to which we should devote particular attention. To spur us on she selects a beautiful passage from the pen of St. Cyprian. The saint begins with an example of patience, the patience of God Himself. "This is a virtue we share in common with God Himself, for patience has its source in God, and from Him derives its glory and its dignity. Both its origin and its greatness are due to God, its Author. Man should indeed love whatever is dear to God; and whatever good His divine Majesty

loves, It commends to men. If God is both our Lord and Father, we should seek to imitate the patience of our Lord and Father; for servants ought to obey, and children ought not to prove unworthy of their parentage."

At this point Cyprian scans the life of Christ to point out examples of His patience, particularly during His sacred passion. The remaining books of Holy Scripture, both of the Old Testament and the New, contain numerous examples of patience. Finally, our saint discusses the relation of patience to ordinary Christian life. It is the virtue that gives perseverance, preserves from vice, maintains charity, overcomes hatred and hypocrisy, and triumphs over the obstacles of life. "Patience touches every phase of human activity; nothing can be brought to completion in all our strivings unless patience endows us with that power. It is patience that both commends us to God and keeps us in His service.

"Patience restrains anger, bridles the tongue, governs the mind, maintains peace, regulates discipline, breaks the force of evil desires, checks the violence of rising passions, quenches the flame of hatred, controls the power of the rich, consoles the poor in their neediness, safeguards the blessed integrity of virgins, the chastity of widows, and the inseparable union of love between those espoused or married. Patience makes man humble in prosperity, courageous in adversity, meek under insults and injuries. Patience teaches us to forgive the sinner quickly, and when we ourselves offend, to pray long and earnestly for pardon. Through patience we overcome temptation, endure persecution, embrace suffering and martyrdom itself. Patience bolsters the very foundation of our faith; mightily does patience further the increase of our hope. It likewise guides all our actions, enabling us to remain on the path of Christ, walking in His patience."

MONDAY OF THE FOURTH WEEK AFTER EASTER

1. Easter Hymns. This week the responsories may be regarded as stanzas of a long hymn featuring the "Alleluia."

To you, O God, I will sing a new canticle: Alleluia.
On a ten-stringed psaltery I will sing to You:
Alleluia, alleluia.
You are my God, I will praise You.
You are my God, I will exalt You.
On a ten-stringed psaltery I will sing to
You: Alleluia, alleluia.

Antiphons. "Was not our heart burning within us concerning Jesus while He was speaking to us on the road? Alleluia" (Ben. Ant.). "I speak the truth to you; it is expedient for you that I depart. For if I do not go, the Advocate will not come to you, alleluia" (Magn. Ant.). We are happy the Church still recalls the Emmaus scene. It affords an opportunity to reflect lovingly on the Easter season Vesper versicle: "Stay with us, Lord, alleluia; for it is getting towards evening, alleluia." The liturgy

would have us regard Easter time as a journey with the risen Savior like that of the disciples on the way to Emmaus.

2. **Scripture Reading (James 1:18–27).** "Of His own will He has begotten us by the word of truth, that we might be, as it were, the first-fruits of His creatures." James then discourses on bridling the tongue: ". . . let every man be swift to hear, slow to speak, and slow to wrath. . . . be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves. For if anyone is a hearer of the word, and not a doer, he is like a man looking at his natural face in a mirror: for he looks at himself and goes away, and presently he forgets what kind of man he is. . . . But a doer of the work shall be blessed in his deed.

"And if anyone thinks himself to be religious, not restraining his tongue but deceiving his own heart, that man's religion is vain. Religion pure and undefiled before God the Father is this: to give aid to orphans and widows in their tribulation, and to keep oneself unspotted from this world."

3. **The Work of the Holy Spirit. A Meditation.** The activity of the Holy Spirit is a favorite subject in the Easter liturgy. His activity is threefold: a) in the world, b) in the Church, and, c) in the soul. The Holy Spirit will convince the world of its wickedness, while manifesting to all the righteousness and truthfulness of the Church as well as God's certain judgment. He will likewise show the world how He is leading the Church in triumph from age to age; and all those hostile to God will be forced to recognize their defeat, even though they refuse to admit it publicly.

Before Christ's advent, men wallowed in the mire of sin, not realizing how depraved they had become. But now the Church serves as the wicked man's conscience, constantly reproaching him. He hates the Church because she rouses him out of his deadly stupor and points her finger to the boils of sin festering on his languid body. Many, however, have heeded the warning and have returned to Christ. It is due to the Holy Spirit's activity that men will either return to Christ or hate Him; because of His work they will realize their sins, they will see how just

are the claims of the Church, how close God's judgment — and how their response will spell salvation or doom. In the face of the Spirit, the world cannot remain ignorant.

The activity of the Holy Spirit in the Church is far more positive in nature. It is Christ's work that He is continuing, preserving her from error, reminding her of all that her Founder proclaimed. By Him the sacraments become effective. In baptism He builds Himself temples; in confirmation, He transforms Christians into soldiers, priests, and martyrs. The Eucharist (the Sacrifice of the Mass) is also His work; for as He once brought into existence the sacred humanity of Jesus, so now He changes bread and wine into Christ's flesh and blood. The power of blessing and sanctifying He imparts in Holy Orders. That is why our Savior said: "Receive the Holy Spirit, whose sins you shall forgive. . . ."

The activity of the Holy Spirit in the individual soul follows from the foregoing. He acts as each soul's Teacher and Guide in this vale of tears. In your heart too there is a garden in which He plants the divine seed of grace, and over its growth He watches carefully. Zealously He roots out the weeds so that the fruit of good works may come forth in full abundance.

TUESDAY OF THE FOURTH WEEK AFTER EASTER

1. **Easter Antiphons.** "Peace be to you! It is I, alleluia. Fear not, alleluia" (Ben. Ant.). "When the Advocate, the Spirit of truth, has come, He will convict the world of sin, and of justice, and of judgment, alleluia" (Magn. Ant.).

If ever I forget You, O Alleluia,
Let my right hand wither.
Let my tongue cleave to my jaws,
If I fail to remember You, O Alleluia, Alleluia! (Resp.)

2. Scripture Reading (James 2:1–13). It is against those who show favoritism in dealing with others that St. James now directs his words. "My brethren, do not join faith in our glorious Lord Jesus Christ with partiality towards persons. For if a man in fine apparel, having a gold ring, enters your assembly, and a poor man in mean attire enters also, and you pay attention to him who is clothed in fine apparel and say, 'Sit here in this good place'; but you say to the poor man, 'Stand there,' or, 'Sit by my footstool'; are you not making distinctions among yourselves, and do you not become judges with evil thoughts?

"Listen, my beloved brethren! Has not God chosen the poor of this world to be rich in faith and heirs of the kingdom which God has promised to those who love Him? But you have dishonored the poor man. Do not the rich use their power to oppress you, and do not they drag you before judgment seats? Do they not blaspheme the good name by which you are called? But if you fulfill the royal law, according to the Scriptures, 'You must love your neighbor as yourself,' you are acting properly. . . . For judgment is without mercy to him who has not shown mercy, while mercy triumphs in the face of judgment."

WEDNESDAY OF THE FOURTH WEEK AFTER EASTER

1. Easter Hymns and Antiphons. "A spirit does not have flesh and bones, as you see I have; for this reason believe, alleluia" (Ben. Ant.). "Many things yet I have to say to you, but you cannot bear them now. But when He, the Spirit of truth, has come, He will teach you all the truth, alleluia" (Magn. Ant.). In the morning the Church fills our minds with a resurrection scene, while for Vespers she teaches us from the Sunday Gospel.

Sing us the song: Alleluia!
In a foreign land how can we sing the Lord's song,
the "Alleluia, alleluia"?
Indeed, the very ones who led us captive bade us
sing joyous songs!
In a foreign land how can we sing the Lord's song,
the "Alleluia, alleluia"? (Resp.)

2. Scripture Reading (James 2:14–26). Today we meet the celebrated passage on "faith and works" in St. James. "What will it profit, my brethren, if a man says he has faith, but does not have works? Can the faith save him? And if a brother or a sister be naked and in want of daily food, and one of you say to them, 'Go in peace, be warmed and filled,' yet you do not give them what is necessary for the body, what does it profit? So faith too, unless it has works, is dead in itself. But someone will say, 'You have faith, and I have works.' Show me your faith without works, and I from my works will show you my faith. You believe that there is one God. You do well. The devils also believe, and tremble.

"But do you want to know, O senseless man, that faith without works is useless? Was not Abraham our father justified by works, when he offered up Isaac his son upon the altar? Do you not see that faith worked along with his works, and by works the faith was made perfect? And the Scripture was ful-

filled which says, 'Abraham believed God, and it was reckoned to him as justice, and he was called the friend of God.' . . . For just as the body without the spirit is dead, so faith also without works is dead."

THURSDAY OF THE FOURTH WEEK AFTER EASTER

1. **Easter Hymns.** "The disciples offered the Lord a piece of broiled fish and a honeycomb, alleluia, alleluia" (Ben. Ant.). "He will not speak on His own authority; but whatever He will hear He will speak, and the things that are to come He will declare to you, alleluia" (Magn. Ant.).

The waters saw You, O God, the waters saw You, and they were afraid.
Great was the noise of the waters; the clouds thundered: Alleluia, alleluia.
Your lightning illumined the world; the earth saw it and trembled! (Resp.).

2. **Scripture Reading (James 3:1–18).** St. James is unusually serious today as he gives us an unforgettable lesson on bridling the tongue. He points out how mortifying one's tongue builds character and strengthens the will. "Let not many of you become teachers, my brethren, knowing that you will receive a greater judgment. For in many things we all offend. If anyone does not offend in word, he is a perfect man, able also to lead round by a bridle the whole body. For if we put bits into horses' mouths that they may obey us, we control their whole body also.

"Behold, even the ships, great as they are, and driven by boisterous winds, are steered by a small rudder wherever the

touch of the steersman pleases. So the tongue also is a little member, but its boasts mightily. Behold, how small a fire — how great a forest it kindles! And the tongue is a fire, the very world of iniquity. The tongue is placed among our members, defiling the whole body, and setting on fire the course of our life, being itself set on fire by hell.

"For every kind of beast and bird, and of serpents and the rest, is tamed and has been tamed by mankind; but the tongue no man can tame — a restless evil, full of deadly poison. With it we bless God the Father; and with it we curse men, who have been made after the likeness of God. Out of the same mouth proceed blessing and cursing. These things, my brethren, ought not to be so. Does the fountain send forth sweet and bitter water from the same opening? Can a fig tree, my brethren, bear olives, or a vine figs? So neither can salt water yield fresh water."

Much, indeed, for meditation in this passage! But the priest will not conclude his reflections without recalling how he asks a blessing for his lips at Mass so that he might be worthy to announce the glad tidings of the Gospel. With what care, then, should he guard his tongue, the instrument used to herald the words of God!

FRIDAY OF THE FOURTH WEEK AFTER EASTER

1. **Easter Hymns.** At sunrise, "These are the words that I spoke to you while I was with you: Alleluia, alleluia" (Ben. Ant.).

Now let them who were redeemed say: Alleluia, alleluia!
By the Lord: Alleluia, alleluia.
Whom He redeemed from the hand of the enemy and
assembled from all places. (Resp.)

2. Scripture Reading (James 4:1–17). As distinguishing marks of false wisdom, the apostle lists strife, worldliness, and covetousness. "Whence do wars and quarrels come among you? Is it not from this, from your passions, which wage war in your members? You covet and do not have; you kill and envy, and cannot obtain. You quarrel and wrangle, and you do not have because you do not ask. You ask and do not receive, because you ask amiss, that you may spend it upon your passions.

"Adulterers, do you not know that the friendship of this world is enmity with God? Therefore, whoever wishes to be a friend of this world becomes an enemy of God. Or do you think that the Scripture says in vain, 'The Spirit which dwells in you covets unto jealousy'? But He gives a greater grace. For this reason it says, 'God resists the proud, but gives grace to the humble.' Be subject therefore to God, but resist the devil, and he will flee from you. Draw near to God, and He will draw near to you. Cleanse your hands, you sinners, and purify your hearts, you double-minded. Be sorrowful, and mourn, and weep; let your laughter be turned into mourning, and your joy into sadness. Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord, and He will exalt you.

"Brethren, do not speak against one another. He who speaks against a brother, or judges his brother, speaks against the Law and judges the Law. But if you judge the Law, you are not a doer of the Law, but a judge. There is one Lawgiver and Judge, He

who is able to destroy and to save. But you who judge your neighbor, who are you?

"Behold now, you who say, 'Today or tomorrow we will go into such a city, and spend a year there, and trade and make money'; you who do not know what will happen tomorrow. For what is your life? It is a mist that appears for a little while, and then vanishes. You ought rather to say, 'If the Lord will,' and 'If we live, we will do this or that.' But now you boast in your arrogance. All such boasting is evil. Therefore he who knows how to do good, and does not do it, commits a sin."

SATURDAY OF THE FOURTH WEEK AFTER EASTER

1. Scripture Reading (James 5:1–16). Today we read the concluding chapter to this beautiful and practical Epistle. St. James begins with strong words against those who serve Mammon. "Come now, you rich, weep and howl over your miseries which will come upon you. Your riches have rotted, and your garments have become moth-eaten. Your gold and silver are rusted; and their rust will be a witness against you, and will devour your flesh as fire does. You have laid up treasure in the last days! Behold, the wages of the laborers who reaped your fields, which have been kept back by you unjustly, cry out; and their cry has entered into the ears of the Lord of Hosts. You have feasted upon earth, and you have nourished your hearts on dissipation in the day of slaughter. You have condemned and put to death the just, and he did not resist you."

The apostle's final admonition is patience. "Be patient, therefore, brethren, until the coming of the Lord. Behold, the farmer waits for the precious fruit of the earth, being patient until it receives the early and the late rain. Do you also be patient; strengthen your hearts; for the coming of the Lord is at hand. Do not complain against one other, brethren, that you may not be judged. Behold, the Judge is standing at the door.

"Take, brethren, as an example of labor and patience, the

prophets who spoke in the Name of the Lord. Behold, we call them blessed who have endured. You have heard of the patience of Job, and you have seen the purpose of the Lord, how the Lord is merciful and compassionate. But above all things, my brethren, do not swear, either by heaven or by the earth, or any other oath; but let your yes be yes, your no, no; that you may not fall under judgment.

"Is any one of you sad? Let him pray. Is any one of you in good spirits? Let him sing a hymn. Is any one among you sick? Let him bring in the presbyters of the Church, and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the Name of the Lord. And the prayer of faith will save the sick man, and the Lord will raise him up, and if he be in sins, they shall be forgiven him. Confess, therefore, your sins to one another, and pray for one another, that you may be saved. For the unceasing prayer of a just man is of great avail."

FIFTH WEEK AFTER EASTER

Seldom during the year does a week occur so rich in liturgy. Five times the faithful gather around the altar of Sacrifice, viz., on Sunday, on the three Rogation days, and on the feast of the Ascension, a holy day of obligation. Two words, *rogation* and

ascension, would serve to synthesize all that is proper to the coming week. And the nexus between these two topics? Originally, no intentional relationship existed between the Rogation days and Christ's ascension; nevertheless, it is not difficult to discover one. Christ is ready to begin His return journey to heaven. Before He leaves we hasten to give Him our problems and petitions that He may take them along to His everlasting home and place them at the feet of His heavenly Father.

Here we have the reason why this Sunday is not only a day of preparation for the Lord's journey, but likewise one of petition. The Church takes this opportunity to instill in us deepest trust in the prayer of petition. On the following three Rogation days we will place in Christ's hands all our needs and desires for the months to come. Most fervently we will pray for our corporal and spiritual wants, for our relatives, our nation, and for all Christendom. Then on Thursday we will joyfully escort our Lord to heaven.

Saturday evening. The spirit of Rogation week finds its first expression in the Magnificat antiphon, "Hitherto you have not asked anything in My Name. Ask, and you shall receive, alleluia."

FIFTH SUNDAY AFTER EASTER

Ask, and you shall receive

The day's major antiphons clearly show the thoughts uppermost in the mind of Mother Church. "Hitherto you have not asked anything in My Name. Ask, and you shall receive, alleluia" (Ben. Ant.). "Ask, and you shall receive, that your joy may be full; for the Father Himself loves you because you have loved Me, and have believed, alleluia" (Magn. Ant.).

1. **Holy Mass (Vocem jucunditatis).** The nearer we approach the moment of Christ's departure, the more resounding our alleluias. (The Church does not occupy herself with sentimental mourning over Christ's departure.) "Proclaim this with a joyous shout that all may hear: Alleluia! Announce to the ends of the earth: The Lord has delivered His people, alleluia, alleluia" (*Intr.*). Psalm 65, the *Canticum Resurrectionis*, follows the Introit antiphon; it is our thanksgiving hymn to God for having "delivered His people."

In the *Oration* holy Mother Church makes two important requests; with God's help may we realize more fully the glory of Christianity, and then live accordingly. For it is this that constitutes the mature Christian, viz., genuine faith and daily life that harmonizes with it. Frequently a corresponding division of subject matter may be sensed in the Epistle and Gospel. The latter usually emphasizes dogma and mystery, the former morality and action. Note, for instance, how practical today's *Epistle* is, how it stresses virtuous living. As a matter of fact the Epistles have been exceptional from this viewpoint since the third Sunday after Easter. The apostle James, who gave us so many worthwhile and practical points during the past week, instructs us again today. One who had thick and hard callouses on his knees from long hours in prayer is certainly worthy and competent to speak on Rogation Sunday. He offers examples for one of the petitions made in the Collect, viz, to curb the tongue; to practice mercy; to keep oneself unspotted from the world.

The *Alleluia* chant resembles an echo to the Epistle. For in

the measure that we accept its message we become miniature suns, reflecting Christ's glory as He rises before us on the Easter horizon. The second versicle is particularly beautiful:

I came forth from the Father
and have come into the world.
Again I leave the world
and go to the Father.

In these four brief sentences Christ's whole life is unfurled before us. They resemble four pillars upon which rest the work of our redemption. As you pray these words, apply them to yourself; it is a prayer that could well be repeated daily. In the *Gospel* Christ assures us that requests made in His Name will always be heard. This promise constitutes the Sunday's "glad tidings," and occasioned the three Rogation days that follow. Continuing His discourse Jesus reveals two great blessings of the Messianic era, viz., God will act as a loving Father to us His children; the Holy Ghost will manifest the truth to souls directly, not by way of proverbs. It is through the Church's cult that these two blessings come to men.

How beautifully Christ characterizes the liturgy in today's Gospel! On our part it means speaking to the Father in Jesus' Name; on God's part it means bestowing truth and grace. The above four lines from our Savior's lips ring out like a final summary of His whole life's work on the eve of His ascension. Before departing He tells us emphatically: This was My Mission.

Psalm 65 serves as the *Offertory* chant. We neophytes are grateful that "He gave life to my soul" and freed it from the snares of the devil. In the *Secret* we pray that "the Eucharistic service may enable us to reach heavenly glory", i.e., help us follow Christ to heaven. There is an exceptionally joyous ring to the *Communion* chant; it can readily be used as a joyful hymn in praise of redemption, a redemption that now in the Eucharist produces its fruits. The *Postcommunion* declares that those "who have been nourished at the heavenly banquet table" are best

equipped to pray and plead before God; their prayers have been purified, and purified prayers are always answered.

2. **Divine Office.** During this week the Scripture Readings are taken from St. Peter's two epistles. These encyclicals of the first Pope should be read with greatest rever-

The day's leading thoughts find expression in the illustration. Today Mother Church (the "Orante") exhorts us to place our petitions in the hands of the departing Savior. *Kyrie, eleison* is her constant plea, with it she begins each Mass; and during the coming Rogation days it will also be repeated in the Litany. The *Kyrie* is the Church's exile song on earth; in heaven she will sing Alleluia. The light of the risen Sun (Christ) beams down upon the praying Church (Allel. verse). The flowers, sheaves, and tendrils point to the blessings of God that should come down on field and garden. The four corner vignettes beautifully outline the life of Christ. The triangle and tetragrammaton (Yahweh) represent the Blessed Trinity; the Redeemer proceeded from the Father and was sent into the world by the Blessed Trinity. "And came into this world," (bottom left); poor and weak the Son of God was born at Bethlehem. "Again I leave the world," Christ said at the Last Supper; but He was thinking primarily of His death on the Cross (lower right). "And go to the Father"; now He is preparing the return journey to heaven where the crown of triumph is awaiting Him (upper right).

ence. The style may be somewhat difficult, but the author's enthusiasm and fervor carry one along. Particularly noteworthy is the stress the prince of the apostles lays upon our participation in Christ's royal priesthood. Today's first nocturn covers the first chapter of the apostle's letter.

In the lessons of the second nocturn St. Ambrose discourses on faith in Christ's resurrection. Arguing as does St. Paul, he proves that our bodies will rise again because Christ rose from the dead (1 Cor. 15): "Christ is the first-born of the dead, the first-fruits of those who have fallen asleep. Now there is no essential difference between the first-fruits and the rest of the crop; to obtain divine blessing upon the latter the former are brought as offerings to God. They constitute a sacred gift representing the whole crop, and to a certain extent a kind of sacrificial oblation from redeemed nature.

"Now Christ is the first-fruits of those who have fallen asleep; but as in Adam all die, so in Christ all will be made to live. Therefore, as the first-fruits of death were in Adam, the first-fruits of the resurrection are in Christ.

"All will indeed rise again, but this should not make anyone sad, or cause the just man to grieve; for even if all share alike in the resurrection, he may look forward to a special reward for his virtue. . . . What a grave sacrilege it is not to believe in the resurrection . . . In Christ the world arose; in Him heaven arose; in Him the earth arose. For there will be a new heaven and a new earth."

3. This Sunday's Liturgical Message. A Meditation. During the last two weeks the Church has been directing her attention to the approaching mysteries. In the liturgical life Pentecost means maturity. If at Easter we received anew the adoption as children of God, Pentecost should bring us to full spiritual manhood. When the graces of Pentecost have filled our souls, we should be ready to take our place in the world as seasoned Christians. That is why the Church gave us practical lessons and warnings in the second half of the Paschal season. On the third Sunday she told us that we were strangers and did not belong

to the world. On the fourth Sunday she read the very practical epistle of St. James and gave us a lesson on patience. Today too we receive a number of admonitions for daily life. Our Savior teaches us concerning prayer in His Name, and the Epistle from St. James is an important lesson in Christian morality.

Nevertheless, it seems to me that today's liturgy contains three lessons of special interest and importance to an individual or to a community that endeavors to live by the liturgy.

a) The first lesson may be entitled: Asking God in the Name of Jesus. Now what is the nature of a plea made in the Name of Jesus? Certainly it must reflect the spirit of Jesus, it must rely on the merits of Jesus for its fulfillment, and its object must be such that He can approve it. Liturgical prayer certainly meets these requirements. It is prayer made in the Name of the Church and of Christ, it is the prayer of Christ's mystical Body.

How liturgical prayer towers above private prayer! The one is my prayer as an isolated individual, the other is the prayer of God's holy Church. Before God my private prayer is as acceptable as I personally am pleasing to Him; but the Church's prayer is always wholly acceptable because she is the stainless Bride — even Christ's own Body. When the Church prays, Christ prays; is not this prayer in His Name? But where may one find prayer-forms in the Name of Christ? In the Breviary, for instance. The Divine Office is not "the priest's prayerbook." It belongs to the entire Church. The ordinary Catholic may not be able to say the whole Office daily, but he can pray choice excerpts with the Church.

The Mass is another prayer that meets all the requirements, in fact it is the noblest of all prayers offered in the Name of Jesus. At Mass we not only rely upon Christ's promise; He gives us a pledge of assurance, He allows us to bring His own Body and Blood before the heavenly Father. Remember too how every oration ends with the words, "Through Christ our Lord," making Him the Mediator for our prayer.

b) A second liturgical lesson in today's Mass touches upon

the life of our blessed Redeemer. This lesson is summarized in the text, "I came forth from the Father and have come into the world. Again I leave the world and go to the Father." The passage obtains added importance by occurring twice in the formulary, in the Alleluia and in the Gospel. We are not wrong in thinking that there is reason for this. A little reflection on the text shows that it outlines the two major divisions of the ecclesiastical year. "I came forth from the Father and have come into the world." This is the Christmas cycle. "Again I leave the world and go to the Father." Here we have the fundamental mysteries of the Easter cycle. Thus today's holy Mass defines for us the Church's year of grace.

In today's Gospel Jesus also made a statement that was not immediately clear, even to His apostles, "These things I have spoken to you in proverbs. The hour is coming when I will no longer speak to you in parables, but will speak to you plainly of the Father." What did He mean by these words? The life of Christ, His deeds and His miracles foreshadowed His work in the Church and in souls. It is our task to study His earthly life and see it as a grand panorama of what He is now accomplishing in us through grace.

Here we have the key to the proper interpretation of Holy Scripture. We will not approach the Gospels simply as historical documents because this is not the way in which the liturgy approaches them; not the past but the present is the matter for today's lesson in the school of spiritual life. Christ's emotions, sentiments, acts, and thoughts are the same today as in Palestine; in fact, these were symbols then of realities today. Therefore I must change my entire approach. When Christ speaks, it is to me that He is speaking, and for my benefit. The Gospel in all its beauty and power and spiritual glory belongs to the Church of which I am a member, it belongs to me! My ears may listen to a miracle in the Gospel, but in my mind I know that the message describes Christ's work in my soul. At that time Jesus healed sick bodies, now He heals me of many spiritual ills. In those days He called the dead back to life, today He restores

life to those who are dead in sin. Christ's entire life, then, with all its miracles and wondrous deeds, was but a picture preview of His activity in the Church and in the individual soul.

c) These first two lessons have provided good reasons to be joyful and grateful. The third may make us blush. Recall the Epistle: "Be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves." What does the Church mean to say? Yes, she commends you if you faithfully attend divine services, listen to the preacher, and participate actively in the liturgical celebration. But that is not enough. You must live according to the liturgy when at work, when at play, when at home. You have duties in the world. As a favored child of the Church and of Christ, you have a strict duty to pattern your life on the liturgy.

Recall how on Low Sunday the Church exhorted us "to act and live" the Easter mystery. This same holds true for every Sunday, every feast. Liturgically-minded Christians must be practical Christians; and St. James, great liturgist and man of prayer that he was, gives us pointers on how to proceed. He insists that a truly liturgical person must live out the liturgy; he must check his tongue, aid the poor, keep unspotted from the world's pollution. This is liturgy pure and undefiled before God the Father. The tongue that at Mass sings the praises of God and is reddened with Christ's precious blood must remain holy throughout the day, throughout the week. The person who calls God Father in church must treat his neighbor as a brother in the street. The body that bows in worship before God near the altar must remain immaculate out in the world of men.

This, then, is the high ideal cherished by every liturgically-minded Christian: to pray with the Church, to live with the Church by observing her year of grace, and to make the liturgy the vitalizing factor in daily life.

MONDAY OF ROGATION WEEK

Station at St. Mary Major

Ask, and it shall be given to you

1. **The Rogation Liturgy.** At the present time the Western Church observes only four Rogation days, one on April 25 (St. Mark's Rogation day), and three preceding Ascension Thursday. These days the Church devotes to prayer, beseeching God to alleviate physical and spiritual needs, and to bless the produce of field and garden. There were many Rogation days in the calendar of the ancient Church, some on set dates during the year, others at times of particular crises. The practice of three Rogation days before the feast of Christ's Ascension originated in Gaul (modern France). The saintly bishop Mamertus of Vienne introduced these days of prayer and penance when catastrophe threatened the city and its neighborhood about the year 450 A.D. Quickly the custom spread, and eventually it was incorporated into the liturgy of the Western Church.

The celebration consists in a procession followed by the Rogation Mass. In this procession we may sense the last remnant of the obsolete station processions observed by ancient Christians almost daily during Lent and during the first week after Easter.

They would gather in a church known as the *ecclesia collecta* (hence the word "Collect") and from there walk in procession with the bishop and clergy to another church singing the Litany of the Saints and the Kyrie. The place of destination was known as the *statio* or station church, and holy Mass was celebrated there.

Our present Rogation liturgy has preserved something of these venerable practices. Our prayer should not only be sincere and personal, we should also pray as units of a community, for to this type of prayer a special efficacy is attached. In the Rogation procession the Litany of the Saints is recited; it gives us an opportunity to call upon the entire Church triumphant to intercede in our behalf. The prayers concluding the Litany are unusually beautiful and edifying.

2. **Holy Mass (Exaudivit).** After the Church has invoked heaven's entire court for help and has placed her necessities before the Lord, she feels "certain of winning the heart of God" in the Mass that follows. This Mass in all its parts gives consoling promise of answer to our persevering prayer, the Eucharist Itself being the best surety and pledge.

The *Introit* voices the joyful conviction that our prayers and petitions will be heard, and that our cry will 'find entrance" (*introivit*—Introit) at God's holy court. In Psalm 17 David thanked God for the countless benefits and blessings granted him through a long lifetime; his hymn offers high incentive to prayerful pleading. The *Oration* is notable for its simplicity. In our need we rely upon God's fatherly goodness, yet ask for divine protection.

In the *Epistle* St. James, whose knees were thickly calloused from much praying, teaches us that "the unceasing prayer of a just man is of great avail." He cites the example of Elias to bolster our trust. Reference is also made to penance; we should acknowledge our sins to one another, we should lead erring brethren back to the truth. The *Alleluia* song, the shortest of the entire year, consists of a single alleluia; the verse that follows, "Praise the Lord," simply enlarges upon this alleluia and affords

a powerful motive for our plea: "He is good, His mercy endures forever."

Jesus Himself teaches us the power of persevering prayer (*Gosp.*). His message may be presented in triptych form: upon the center panel are inscribed the comforting words, "Ask, and it shall be given to you," while to the one side we see the importunate man whose persistent appeal is finally answered by an unwilling friend, and on the other the good and provident father. The Gospel story becomes a fact as the Mass proceeds. Like begging children we knock at the door of our divine (but not unwilling) friend and brother, Jesus Christ, and are given heavenly Bread as a pledge of greater benefits. Do not overlook the special significance of the three gifts mentioned in the Gospel; bread and fish are Eucharistic symbols, while the egg symbolizes Christ's resurrection, the germ of divine life. See how the Eucharist is God's good answer to our prayer.

Already in the *Offertory* we thank God for hearing and helping us in our need. Or we might listen to this song as coming from the lips of Mother Church, who as the Sacrifice proper begins praises God because Christ is standing "at the right hand of the poor" in His sacrificial death. Thus it would serve well as a prelude to the Sacrifice and provide a sound motive for our confidence. Both in its negative and positive phase the *Secret* is couched in very general terms; our Offertory gifts should "free us from the bonds of wickedness and win the gifts of God's mercy."

The *Communion* isolates and emphasizes the Gospel's central theme; the same Christ who assured us, "Ask, and it shall be given to you," has just given us His Body as a pledge of salvation. Note the complementary character of message and mystery. The final *Oration* begs for the one essential, i.e., growth in true love toward God. The words *tribulatio* and *consolatio* characterize our earthly sojourn; our tears are dried by the consoling kindness of a loving Father in heaven.

The day's major antiphons single out the liturgy's principal theme; like yesterday it is that of petition. "Ask, and it shall be

given to you; seek, and you shall find; knock, and it shall be opened to you, alleluia" (Ben. Ant.). "For the Father Himself loves you because you have loved Me and have believed, alleluia" (Magn. Ant.).

3. Scripture Reading (1 Pet. 2:1 — 3:22). St. Peter exhorts us to a most intimate union with Christ and points out how our nobility as Christians is rooted in a kingly priesthood: "You are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a purchased people that you may proclaim the perfections of Him who has called you out of darkness into His marvellous light." The apostle continues by pointing out and inculcating the duties proper to the various states of life.

4. What petitions will surely be answered? Those which, according to Christ's words, are made in "the right spirit," and which are offered in the Name of Jesus, i.e., tend to further the kingdom of God. In the "Our Father" Christ has given us a summary of such petitions. Therefore, if our wishes are similar to those in the Lord's Prayer, we can assume that they will be heard. These petitions fall under three headings: God's kingdom, daily food, sin. God will certainly grant petitions of this kind.

a) God's kingdom. For this purpose Christ came to earth. Prayers to further God's sovereignty within us or about us are petitions of Christ Himself. Their object is that we may give greater glory to God with heart and tongue, in deed and action; that we may become and remain God's children; that the mystical Body may grow in numbers and in virtue; that worthy priests may be found; in short, that God's kingdom on earth may prosper in every way. To know the will of God and do it, to see God's Providence in the course of human affairs, are petitions which will certainly be fulfilled and which will open the floodgates of grace. In these matters let us resemble the importunate friend and the confident child in the Gospel parable.

b) Daily bread. Do not think that all your petitions must be for spiritual and supernatural benefits. God wishes to relieve earthly needs, provided these are to our spiritual advantage. Yes, we may, we should pray for earthly goods; and our prayers will

undoubtedly be heard even though the answer may not always be identical with our desire. Among such petitions are the following: that God spare us from unemployment; that we may be able to supply our needs in the matter of clothing, nourishment, housing; that we enjoy good health, be granted a bountiful harvest, be preserved from pestilence, famine, and war. Our prayer will certainly be heard, even though God's answer at times may be on a higher level. And when God does not answer the petition, He certainly gives the strength and grace to accept His holy Will.

c) Sin. Now we come to a petition, forgiveness of sin, that always is heard, and here there are no restrictions. We must, of course, make it a genuine prayer, "forgive us as we forgive those who trespass against us"; otherwise our "prayer may be hindered" (1 Pet. 3:7). "Lead us not into temptation." God will never permit anyone to be tempted beyond his strength. If we ask, He will give the grace to overcome the tempter. It is taken for granted that we will not place ourselves in the occasion of sin. "Deliver us from evil." This petition God will surely grant as life ebbs to an end. And once the victory is won, we will experience no tears, no lamenting, no suffering, no evil — in heaven.

TUESDAY OF ROGATION WEEK

Station at St. John Lateran

Lord, have mercy on us

1. **Second Rogation Day.** If at all possible, we will take part in the Rogation procession and Mass today and tomorrow. In spirit we will observe the venerable liturgy at St. John Lateran, the church where baptisms were administered in ancient times. It may aid our piety to group our petitions on these three days.

The first day we will devote to our personal needs; the second, to family and community; the third, to the needs of the universal Church. Not only at the morning liturgy but throughout the day we will continue to pour forth our pleading to God.

The antiphons. "It was necessary for Christ to suffer and to rise again from the dead, alleluia" (Ben. Ant.). "I came forth from the Father and have come into the world. Again I leave the world and go to the Father, alleluia" (Magn. Ant.).

2. Scripture Reading (1 Pet. 3:1 — 4:19). The prince of the apostles speaks of love, of Christian suffering, of patience. The realization of our Savior's approaching second Advent should be a strong incentive to a life of virtue.

3. Reflections on the Nature of True Prayer. In the Rogation liturgy we are reminded of what a great privilege it is to place our needs before God in prayer. The liturgical texts provide 1) instruction on the value and significance of prayer; 2) incentives and aids on how to pray fervently and perseveringly. We need but look at the beautiful Gospel triptych with Christ's words: "Ask and it shall be given to you; seek, and you shall find; knock, and it shall be opened to you. For everyone who asks receives . . .," on the center panel flanked by the importunate friend and the pleading child. Petition is the key to the riches of God's fatherly heart, the key that opens up the treasures of divine mercy.

Yet if we are honest, we will be very ready to admit having had doubts concerning Christ's words just quoted. How often we asked in vain for some favor! What then are the qualities that our petition lacked? How must we pray in order to have our prayers heard? The answer may lie in the object for which we pray, in defects in our disposition, or in the spirit that animates us.

a) The object of prayer. The words of Christ are indeed general in character, they set no limit to the object of one's petition. Nevertheless, our Savior clearly stated that only such pleas will be answered which harmonize with the aims of the kingdom of God. He said: "If you, evil as you are, know how to give good

gifts to your children, how much more will your Father in heaven give good things to those who ask Him!"

God will not give His children harmful gifts. The phrase "good things" is mystical and can perhaps be best explained as covering items that will serve our eternal goal. Certainly we may pray for material favors, but on the condition that they will be "good things" for us. Sometimes God answers a prayer by granting the opposite to that which is asked; instead of a stone, a serpent, or scorpion, He blesses us with bread, eggs, or fish.

b) The second reason why our prayers may not be heard lies in our personal disposition, our lack of faith and love and humility. (1) Whenever Christ performed a miracle, He demanded faith as a prerequisite. On one occasion the apostles could not heal a possessed boy; to their queries Jesus said, "Because of your little faith; for amen I say to you, if you have faith like a mustard seed, you will say to this mountain: Remove from here; and it will remove. And nothing will be impossible to you" (Matth. 17:19). We need the faith that moves mountains. (2) A second obstacle is our lack of love. If we ourselves neither give nor forgive, we can expect no favors from God. In his epistle St. Peter makes a pertinent observation: "Husbands, in like manner dwell with your wives considerately, paying honor to the woman as to the weaker vessel . . . that your prayers be not hindered" (1 Pet. 3:7). Our prayers are "hindered" through lack of love for our neighbor. (3) Lack of humility likewise closes God's dispensing hand. We need only recall the story of the publican and the pharisee. The same parable also teaches us that past sin does not prevent prayers from being heard. God listens to the prayer of a humble sinner rather than to the effusions of a just but proud man.

c) Finally, the spirit with which one prays is important. Do you pray perseveringly, in union with others, submissive to God's will? (1) The two Gospel parables speak clearly of persevering, even importunate petition. God wants to hear our prayers. He does not, however, want us to dictate the time when He should respond. There is high pedagogical wisdom in that God does

not reply at once to our prayers. Perseverance in pleading is good training spiritually, and it purifies our longing. One who is expecting further gifts will more easily be grateful for benefits already received. Old age had already come upon Zacharias, the father of John the Baptist, before his petition was granted. (2) A special efficacy is attached to prayer made in common. "If two of you shall agree on earth about anything at all for which they ask, it shall be done for them by My Father in heaven" (Matth. 18:19). (3) Lastly, our prayers must be rooted deeply in God's holy will. Of this there is no example more moving and convincing than that of Christ Himself during His agony on Mt. Olivet. His Father did not hear Him, did not remove the chalice from Him. And yet our Savior's prayer was answered. He was given strength to drink the chalice to its dregs.

Prayer does not imply the gratification of one's own will, rather that we submerge our wills in that of God. In prayer, in every act, we must leave behind our own pagan, egotistical selves and selflessly seek the good of God's kingdom. As long as prayer serves nothing more than one's own selfish interests, it will never be heard. However, once our hearts and minds are oriented to the welfare of God's kingdom, then prayer will become the bond uniting us most intimately to God. Then we will realize what tremendous power it has.

VIGIL OF THE ASCENSION

Station at St. Peter

Father, the hour has come! Glorify Your Son

Today is the third and last Rogation day. If possible we will take part in the ancient and venerable station procession and in chanting the Litany of the Saints. In spirit we will feel ourselves present within the stational church of St. Peter at Rome, and

in union with all Christendom celebrate the Rogation Mass. It is indeed seldom that we can choose between two formularies, both breathing the spirit peculiar to a given date in the Church's year of grace. In the vigil Mass today we have such an alternate.

1. The Vigil Mass (Vocem jucunditatis). Chants and Orations are from last Sunday's formulary. (The vigil was not observed until the 8th or 9th century.) The *Lessons* are proper, and their choice is a happy one. In successive tableaux we see Christ ascending to heaven as the triumphant Victor, and as the Son of the eternal Father returning home. The *Introit* does not seem wholly appropriate for a vigil Mass (nor does the formulary contain any mention of penance). Filled with joy over the ascension of Jesus, we proclaim the redemption to the entire world, for in the ascension the work of man's redemption had its solemn confirmation. Another anomaly for a vigil Mass is the presence of the *Gloria.*

The *Oration* makes no reference to the vigil or to the ascension; it contains a pointed request for upright thoughts and actions, or as St. James expressed it, faith enlivened by works. The *Epistle* serves as a commentary on a versicle that will be thematic in the ascension liturgy: "Ascending on high, He led captivity captive; He gave gifts to men" (Eph. 4:8). These gifts are the charisms and vocations in the Church; their purpose is to build up the Body of Christ so that it might attain the "full stature of Christ."

At the *Alleluia* the paschal Candle, that glorious symbol of the risen Christ "Who has illumined us," comes once again to mind. Then follow those magnificent words that summarize our blessed Savior's entire life's work, "I came forth from the Father. . . ."

The *Gospel*, taken from the high-priestly prayer Christ ad-

dressed to His Father on the night before He died, touches most hearts deeply. In it He dedicated Himself to a sacrificial death, and took solemn leave of the world; His life work was soon to be consummated. At the *Offertory* we sing a joyous hymn to God "Who made my soul to live." The *Communion*, likewise a joyous hymn of salvation, yields key positions to the alleluia; our final plea is "to desire what is right and to obtain what we desire" (*Postc.*).

2. **Two Ascension Tableaux.** The Lessons put before us two excellent pictures in describing the ascension of Christ; the first has a war background, the second, home and peace. a) Christ has emerged victorious in the struggle with a mighty foe, Satan. On the battlefield of Golgotha He destroyed the enemy's weapons and camp baggage (Ps. 74). Today, laden with rich spoils He enters heaven in triumph. The ascension is the victorious triumphal march of our divine Hero. We, a redeemed people, are the prisoners who follow in His wake. The spoils that He divides are the graces of redemption that come to members of the Church. The Epistle enlarges upon this topic, equating this booty with the various vocations in the Church that serve to build up spiritually Christ's mystical Body.

At this point certain personal deductions should be made. I too am a prisoner in that triumphal march. What spoils has the conquering Savior assigned to me? I am a prisoner, yet I have been redeemed. I am a slave of Christ, and at the same time I am at liberty. I carry the yoke of the Savior, but His yoke is sweet and His burden is light. Like Paul I am "bound in the Lord," although "the word of the Lord is not bound." And the spoils confided to me? "He gave gifts to men." To me He has given the graces of baptism and confirmation, of vocation and state of life, the charismatic gifts of prayer and of the Holy Spirit. Natural gifts too come from Him, such as understanding, talent, virtues, good habits, and emotions. Suffering and crosses likewise are His gift. All these blessings flow from Christ's victorious redemption, and increase His holy triumph. And I am destined to contribute to this His glorification.

b) The scene pictured by the Gospel gives the ascension theme from a different approach. Tomorrow the Son will return to His Father's house. The Father had sent His beloved, His only-begotten Son into a strange country. It was a difficult assignment that the Father imposed upon Him. This mission the Son has now completed, and He stands knocking at the door of His Father's house. The Father Himself opens the door, and the Son says: Father, I have completed the work You gave Me; now I beg You to glorify Me with the glory that I had with You before the world was.

Then He turns and shows the Father His adopted sons and daughters, the redeemed men and women following in His train. Full of joy and love, the Father embraces the Son and His adopted children and presses them to His heart. I was among those who stood before the door of the Father's house. So it is my duty to complete the work that the Father has given me. "Be faithful unto death!" (Scripture Reading: 1 Pet. 5).

THE ASCENSION OF CHRIST

Station at St. Peter

Christ's ascension — our exaltation

After singing the Gospel the deacon extinguishes the paschal Candle, the symbol of the risen Christ. By means of this simple ceremony the liturgy shows that the Lord has now ascended into heaven.

In every Mass, after the consecration, the priest prays: "Therefore, Lord, we Your servants, and likewise Your holy people, call to mind not only the blessed passion of the same Christ, Your Son our Lord, but also His resurrection from the dead as well as His *glorious ascension* into heaven."

Where one finds the Church,
one finds the Spirit
of God

and wherever the Spirit
abides, every kind of grace
and blessing is present

1. **Orientation.** At the death of a beloved friend we are filled with sorrow even though we know that his lot has been bettered. With this frame of mind we might expect the Church to commemorate her Savior's ascension with at least some expression of sadness; but the opposite is true. The feast is one of unrestrained rejoicing. We rejoice over what the mystery meant for Christ and what the mystery means for us.

a) Today Christ triumphs, it is a victory that He fully merited. Recall but a few phases and incidents from His earthly life. He left the throne of His Father, humbled Himself in the womb of the Virgin, lay in Bethlehem's rough stable, fled from His own people into Egypt, and passed years at Nazareth as a common laborer. Tirelessly He searched for the lost sheep in the land of Israel. His own brethren requited Him with nothing but unkindness and misunderstanding. And then, beginning on Olivet and ending on Golgotha, He patiently paid the price of our redemption. And all this because He loved us, because He sought to free us from Satan's power and effect our return home to a heavenly fatherland.

This work, the object of His love and His life's blood, is now completed. He returns to heaven as a conqueror; Son stands before Father and tells of His mission completed. We can characterize today's feast as that of Christ's heavenly enthronement, His coronation as King over heaven and earth.

b) For us too the ascension is an occasion of deepest rejoicing. The glorification of Christ in this mystery is likewise our glorification, an elevation of our human nature. This truth made a profound impression upon the Church fathers. Our human nature now partakes of highest divine honors as in human form Christ, our brother, enters heaven. In His human nature He sits upon the throne of God and will remain there for all eternity. Therefore we, as human beings, enjoy a unique distinction. A member of our race, our Head, is seated at God's right hand; as members of His Body, we become divine. See how concisely this message is worded in the Preface, "Who . . . was lifted up into heaven so that He might make us partakers of His divinity."

Christ's ascension confers divine honors upon us; it also imposes a corresponding obligation — *Sursum corda*, lift up your hearts. Sin does not accompany Christ into heaven; rather it is the chain that keeps us bound to earth. We must break this bond. We must ascend into heaven with our hearts and our wills and our desires, we must "live with our minds in heaven." Then in God's good time we will follow the Lord Jesus with both body and soul glorified.

2. **Celebrating the Feast.** With Breviary and Missal make every effort to observe this feast in the spirit of the Church. Privately, or if circumstances allow, in common with others, begin the celebration with first Vespers. The antiphons describe the King's ascent to heaven. It is a picture that occurs repeatedly in the Mass and Divine Office: "Men of Galilee, why do you marvel as you gaze toward heaven? Alleluia. As you have seen Him go up into heaven, so shall He come again, alleluia, alleluia, alleluia" (Intr.). Rich theological content in poetic form makes the hymn at Lauds, *Salutis humanae*, a prayer that deserves special attention:

> Hail, Thou who man's Redeemer art,
> Jesus, the joy of every heart,
> Great Maker of the world's wide frame
> And purest love's delight and flame!
>
> Our guide, our way to heavenly rest,
> Be Thou the aim of every breast;
> Be Thou the soother of our tears,
> Our sweet reward above the spheres. Amen.

The Magnificat antiphon pictures Christ before the threshold of the heavenly Father's house: "Father, I have manifested Your Name to the men whom You gave to Me. I pray now for them, not for the world, for I am coming to You, alleluia."

Matins, with its collection of kingship psalms, is recited during the night or in the early morning hours. The antiphons give

preference to such expressions as *lift up, exalt, elevate (exaltare, elevare)*. Much may be learnt from the lessons of the second and third nocturns, lessons that are noteworthy for having been delivered at St. Peter's in Rome as station homilies on this feast by Popes Leo I and Gregory I.

"Truly great and indescribable was the reason for rejoicing when, in the presence of that holy gathering of apostles and disciples, human nature in the person of our Savior was lifted up and exalted above the dignity of all heavenly creation; passing above the hierarchies of angels, elevated above the heights of archangels; not suffering any limit or delay in its ascent through the heavenly heights till, having received a seat by the eternal Father, it was joined to the glory of His throne to whose nature it was united in the Word.

"Since, then, the ascension of Christ is also our exaltation, for there is hope that the body will be summoned whither the Head has preceded in glory, let us, dearest brethren, give worthy expression to our exceedingly great joy and be glad in fervent thanksgiving. For today we have not only been confirmed as possessors of paradise, but in Christ we have scanned the very

An ancient ivory plaque inspired this drawing. Christ enters heaven and ascends His star-studded throne. Below His Mother and the apostles are praying, gazing heavenwards "until He comes."

heights of heaven. Greater benefits have we obtained through the ineffable grace of Christ than we had lost through the malice of Satan. Those whom the raging foe had thrust from their first peaceful dwelling, the Son of God has united to Himself and has placed them at the right hand of the Father" (Pope Leo I).

"When we read how slow the disciples were to believe in the Lord's resurrection, we should rivet our attention not upon their weakness, but rather, if I may put it thus, upon what their weakness contributed to strengthen our faith. For it was due to their doubts that the resurrection was corroborated by many proofs; and we who now read these proofs are thereby confirmed in the faith. Without doubt I receive less benefit from Mary Magdalen who believed immediately than from Thomas who long remained doubtful. The latter, entangled in doubt, touched the marks of our Savior's wounds and therewith healed the wounds of doubt in our hearts" (Pope Gregory I).

While reciting Lauds, feel present in spirit on the Mount of Olives. The Hour today has a freshness and joyous ring that is quite unusual. As the sun rises, we hear our departing Savior say: "I ascend to My Father and your Father, to My God and to your God, alleluia."

3. Holy Mass (Viri Galilaei). After Prime and Terce have been prayed, the festal Mass is celebrated. This brings the feast to a climax, makes present mystically its mystery. The station is at St. Peter. In Christendom's greatest church, where Popes Leo and Gregory once preached their homilies, we gather to celebrate the sacred mysteries. The kingship feasts of Christmas and Epiphany are celebrated here. Today, however, the basilica of St. Peter replaces Jerusalem and Mt. Olivet. At the former we dine with the Lord (Epist., Gosp.); at the latter we assemble to view His departure.

It is a beautiful scene that the *Introit* unfurls before us, the apostles gazing heavenwards — a symbol of the Church! For ever since her Savior's departure the Church steadfastly rivets her eyes on heaven, yearning for His second coming (the *parousia* theme). Psalm 46, with its content so easily adapted to our

Savior's ascension, appears in practically all of today's chants: "O clap your hands, all nations" (we are in St. Peter's where men from every nation gather).

The *Oration* reminds us that "we must let our minds dwell on heavenly things" because our Master is in heaven. Through the *Epistle* and *Gospel* we can take part in our Lord's last hours on earth. Both readings emphasize the fact that Jesus appeared to the apostles while they were at table; He still does — in holy Communion. After the Gospel the paschal Candle, symbol of the risen Christ, is extinguished.

The *Offertory* procession becomes our journey with the Lord to heaven, with loud rejoicing and the blast of trumpets; again at the *Communion* we proceed "eastward" and see Him rising above the heavens. The *Secret* presents our offerings to God in honor of His Son's glorious ascension, and begs in return "that we may be freed from present dangers and arrive at eternal life." *Postcommunion*: May the visible signs that we have performed produce their full, invisible effects. In the Preface a significant sentence gives the purpose of Christ's ascension, viz., "that He might make us partakers of His divinity."

4. **The Ascension Psalm (Ps. 46).**

I. King over the Chosen People

"All you people, clap your hands,
shout to God with cries of gladness,
For the Lord, the Most High, the awesome,
is the great King over all the earth.
He brings peoples under us;
nations under our feet.
He chooses for us our inheritance,
the glory of Jacob, whom He loves.

II. King over All Nations

God mounts His throne amid shouts of joy;
the Lord, amid trumpet blasts.
Sing praise to God, sing praise;
sing praise to our King, sing praise.

For King of all the earth is God;
sing hymns of praise.
God reigns over the nations,
God sits upon His holy throne.
The princes of the peoples are gathered together.
with the people of the God of Abraham.
For God's are the guardians of the earth;
He is supreme.

Structure and Message. The psalm is short, its divisions apparent, its content easily understood.

What occasioned this psalm and what was its original theme? In a certain war against hostile neighbors, Israel carried the Ark of the Covenant into battle. God's presence among them was made known by a cloud over the Ark, for the God of the Covenant would Himself accompany His army into battle. The war was fought over the holy "inheritance," the "glory of Jacob," i.e., the Promised Land. Israel emerged victorious, and in the joy of victory Yahweh, the divine King and God of the Covenant, was carried to the summit of Mt. Sion.

With this background the psalm's message becomes apparent. All nations are ordered to pay homage to the God of victory (the clapping of hands was a sign of homage — cf. 4 Kgs. 11:12). Israel's present victory was only a continuation of Josue's triumphant march as He took possession of the Promised Land after subduing the people of Chanaan. From that time the divine King chose as Israel's inheritance "the glory of Jacob whom He loves."

The second strophe describes the triumphant march to the summit of Sion. "Amid shouts of joy and trumpet blasts" the King ascends. The temple musicians strike stringed instruments to welcome the divine Conqueror. The psalm concludes with a reference to Messianic times. In prophetic vision the psalmist sees the Gentiles, led by their princes, entering the kingdom of God, and the Messiah enthroned as King over a Church comprising Jew and Gentile.

Liturgical Application. For us Christians Christ is the divine King. He too engaged the princes of this world in battle, the battle of redemption. On the field of Calvary He conquered and despoiled the arch enemy (Ps. 67: 18–19, You have ascended on high, You have led captivity captive. Distributing gifts You lead redeemed mankind heavenwards, Gentiles not excluded). With shouts of joy and trumpet blasts we accompany our ascending King today as He enters heaven. We worship the sovereign Ruler over nations, the Father of His people.

Psalm 46 contains typical ascension versicles, "God is gone up amid shouts of joy; the Lord with the blast of trumpets." There is power and drama in the triple repetition of these words during today's Mass. We hear them the first time at the entrance of the celebrant. For in the priest vested and approaching the altar, the Church beholds Christ the King ascending to heaven's sanctuary. At the Gospel it is sung a second time while the deacon carries the lectionary to the ambo, an action that again symbolizes the ascending Christ. At the Offertory the faithful ready themselves to take part in the procession heavenwards with Christ their King.

Christ remains victorious over His enemies despite the perse cution of the Church in various countries; and He also will triumph over our evil habits and Satan who prompts them. As Christians we must preserve this joyful optimism. Note how confidently Psalm 46 refers to the success of foreign mission work. (The two Lessons of the Mass will serve as Scripture Read ings. Both treat the ascension, the only instance in the Missal when both Lessons cover the same festal mystery.)

FRIDAY AFTER ASCENSION

Guide our steps on the way to heaven

Before the simplification of the rubrics through the 1955 reform, the feast of the Ascension was followed by a privileged octave. Much of this octave still remains. In the Office, for instance, the Invitatory and Hymn at Matins continues from the Ascension; all the Hours, from the Chapter to their conclusion and the Little Hours in their entirety, are from the Ascension; and the liturgy for the Sunday following is practically identical with that of Ascension Thursday. The Mass and Office of Ascension are supplanted only on days when a feast occurs, but this may happen rather often. This we may regret, because the Ascension liturgy is so extraordinarily well composed and contains such a wealth of profound theology. Seldom during the year are there more beautiful Lessons from patristic sources. Those who are not bound to follow an *Ordo* may well pray the Office proper to each day of the octave.

1. **A Feast to Honor our King.** It would be quite in keeping with the spirit of this feast to meditate upon Christ as the Victor, the conquering Hero, who laden with spoil "ascends on high, leading captivity captive" (Ps. 67), or as the Son who now returns to His Father's house after fulfilling the sublimest of missions. But since Pius XI instituted the feast of Christ the King, we are more ready to behold our Redeemer as did the ancient Church, a King enthroned in power and majesty. In the course of the ecclesiastical year there are a number of feasts devoted to Christ's kingship. That of the Ascension is especially beautiful. Today our King enters His kingdom in triumph, He takes possession of His throne, it is His solemn coronation day.

Surely Christ was King during the days of His earthly sojourn. He was King as He lay in the manger — *Rex pacificus*. He was King in Nazareth — *Rex absconditus*. He was King during the sacred passion. In the depths of degradation He said to Pilate, "I am a King." Yes, hanging on the Cross "He ruled from the

Tree" — *Regnavit a ligno Deus.* The Cross was His throne, thorns were His crown, a reed was His scepter. All this, however, was kingship concealed. Today He begins to rule in might and majesty.

a) In spirit let us accompany our Lord as He proceeds heavenwards in triumph, let us witness the celestial reception accorded Him. The triumphal marches prepared for the great men of earth fade into insignificance when compared to that with which the heavenly court is honoring their King. On Wednesday within the octave St. Gregory of Nyssa attempts a description of the scene at the gate of heaven. When the heavenly gatekeepers hear that the "Lord of hosts and King of glory" is approaching, they exultingly throw open the "eternal portals." The Father joyously embraces His Son and leads Him to the throne of glory. Today the Church triumphant in heaven re-enacts the scene of her King's enthronement. The gleaming hosts of angels fly to meet Him, the college of apostles welcome Him, the victorious army of martyrs and confessors surround Him, a choir of blessed virgins greet Him with songs of jubilation (cf. Rite for a Departing Soul). Humbly we poor pilgrims of earth lose ourselves in this army of saints, and with them do homage to our King.

b) Next we see the Father conducting His Son to heaven's highest throne, installing Him with sacred words, "Be seated at My right hand until I make Your enemies a footstool for Your feet" (Ps. 109). And from this instant our Redeemer reigns as King over heaven and earth. To Him the Father has entrusted all things, and He will rule until the end of time. Only after the last redeemed soul will have been incorporated into His mystical Body and all His "enemies will have become His footstool" (i.e., after the last judgment), will Christ restore this kingship to the Father so "that God may be all in all" (1 Cor. 15:28).

c) Finally, let us reflect upon our King's apparel and royal crown. His apparel is His holy humanity. This is why the guards at the gate did not immediately recognize Him, "clothed as He was with the mean robe of human nature, His garments spotted with blood from the wine-press of human misfortunes" (St.

Gregory of Nyssa, in the above-mentioned homily). The Man Christ occupies the throne of divine power! It was this that filled the fathers of the Church with amazement. With Christ's enthronement our human nature was infinitely ennobled. In the words of Pope Leo I, "The ascension of Christ is our elevation." With joy we can point to one of our brothers occupying the throne of God.

And what type of crown does He wear? What does it symbolize? Today in Psalm 20 we sing, "You have placed upon His head a crown of precious gems." St. Paul wrote to his favorite community: You are my crown. Surely then the crown of our heavenly King is His saints. See those tiers of precious stones — martyrs as rubies, virgins as pearls, confessors as amethysts. And as God's little child I too should be a lovely stone in the crown of my King.

2. **Spiritual Reading.** There is no reason why we should not take the Lessons of the Second and Third Nocturns as given in the Breviary for our spiritual reading today. Here we again meet Pope St. Leo I, who repeats and develops a favorite patristic theme, i.e., through Christ's ascension human nature was infinitely ennobled. "At Easter our Lord's resurrection was the reason for our rejoicing; and now His ascension into heaven is the cause of similar joy. For we are keeping the day when lowly human nature was elevated in Christ above all the heavenly hosts, above the hierarchies of angels, far beyond the heights of all celestial powers, to sit with God the Father."

Enlightening too is the reason for Christ's departure from this earth. "It is the sign of a great mind and of a heart that truly believes to accept what is not seen with bodily eyes, and to desire that toward which human gaze cannot be directed. But how could this spirit develop in our breasts, or how could anyone be justified by faith, if salvation depended only upon such things as might be seen directly with human eyes? It was for this reason that the Lord said to the man who would have doubted the resurrection unless he would have been allowed to examine both by sight and by touch the very marks of the passion in His

flesh: Because you have seen Me, you have believed. Blessed are they who have not seen, and yet have believed."

Of an entirely different type is the homily which Pope St. Gregory I gave in the same St. Peter's some 150 years later. Here we have the only instance of the same homily being read almost in its entirety on successive days during an octave. The illustrious Pontiff discourses on the final words Jesus spoke to His disciples: He who believes and is baptized shall be saved, but he who does not believe shall be condemned.

"Perhaps someone will say: I already believe; therefore I shall be saved. He speaks the truth, if he shows his faith by deeds; for only that faith is genuine that does not contradict in action what it professes in words. This is why Paul says concerning certain false brethren: They profess to know God, but by their works they disown Him. St. John likewise tells us: He who says that he knows God, and does not keep His commandments, is a liar."

3. Scripture Reading (2 Pet. 1:1–21). Today's first nocturn comes from the farewell encyclical of Christ's first vicar on earth. In it the apostle instructs us on the second Advent and the final judgment. The last things should be a powerful incentive to Christian virtue.

SATURDAY AFTER ASCENSION

You are seated at the right hand of the Father

1. The Ascension. Again today three great Popes are at hand to speak to us: Peter, Leo I, Gregory I.

Leo I explains how our faith in Christ was deepened and spiritualized by the ascension. "What was visible in our blessed Redeemer's earthly life has now been sacramentalized. It was to make our faith more noble and firm that belief through mere hearing replaced knowledge gained by seeing; and such faith is readily had in hearts enlightened by heavenly grace. This faith was deepened by the Lord's ascension and confirmed by the gifts

of the Holy Spirit; it cannot be shaken by chains or prisons, by banishments, hunger, fire, by the mangling of wild beasts or by the most inhuman cruelties persecutors may devise. In every quarter of the world men and women, small boys and tender maidens have fought and shed their last drop of blood for this faith. By this faith devils are cast out, diseases cured, and the dead raised to life."

Gregory I is primarily a practical pastor, he tries to apply the Gospel to daily life. "These signs shall attend those who believe. . . . Is it possible, my brethren, that you do not believe because you do not perform these miracles? No. Such miracles were needed when the Church was first founded. It was to increase the faith of the multitude of believers that God nourished it by miracles. We ourselves do something similar when we set out saplings; we continue to water them until we see that they have taken firm root in the ground; once they are firmly rooted, we discontinue the watering. St. Paul's dictum may also be quoted here: Tongues are a sign, not to believers, but to unbelievers.

"In these signs and wonders there is, however, a lesson that can be detected upon closer study. Daily, holy Church performs spiritually what the apostles once did visibly. For when her priests, by the power of exorcism, impose hands upon believers and forbid evil spirits to dwell in their minds, what else do they do but cast out devils? And when the faithful abandon the profane talk of their previous mode of life to discuss the sacred mysteries and chant the praises and power of their Creator to the full limit of their ability, what are they doing if not speaking with new tongues? And when by good exhortation they root out evil from other hearts, are they not taking up serpents?"

2. **Christ's Return to Heaven. A Meditation.** What a sublime moment as Christ ascended from Mt. Olivet! Surely He took a long, last parting glance over the world. Then He lifted His eyes and beheld that unbounded kingdom of grace and glory open before Him.

He gazed back upon this earth! His earthly life was a thing of the past. All toil, suffering, and conflicts were over. How brief

that life now seemed. Across the valley stood the Temple, majestically. He had often taught there, had been the object of contradiction and hatred to the very point of stoning. Below Him lay the Mount of Olives, there He had begun His sacred passion. And there the traitor had kissed Him. The house of Caiphas and Pilate's palace rose above the confusion of roofs; there He had been condemned.

On the opposite side of the City was a bare hill. It was not long since three crosses had been implanted there; and on the center one He had shed His blood as a common criminal.

Now all this was over — like a brief, cruel dream. In so short a time, such an immeasurable amount of good! His entire life covered little more than thirty years, of which barely three were devoted to a public ministry; yet the import of His life was boundless as eternity itself. The words He spoke had ceased with the winds that carried them, and yet "heaven and earth would pass away" before His words. The imprints His tired feet left on Palestine's dusty roads soon vanished, but men would follow in His footsteps till the end of time. His Cross, taken down on Calvary, would be repeatedly erected as mankind's only hope. His sacrifice, completed and consummated once and for all, would be daily renewed in every quarter to bring peace and grace to men. Perhaps these reflections passed through our Savior's mind as the earth disappeared below Him.

Then He lifted His eyes, and a kingdom of unending bliss opened before Him! Exultant choirs of angels came to meet Him and to prostrate themselves in adoration. Ever higher He ascends into the Holy City, into the heavenly Jerusalem. Now He reaches the throne of the Most High. There with divine homage the eternal Father receives His only-begotten Son and invites Him to His rightful place as King of all creation, as Ruler of the world.

On bended knees the highest angels present crown and scepter. Thousands upon thousands are ready to do His bidding, they await His nod eager to serve. Presently He orders the gates of the heavenly City to be opened wide. For ages they had been

closed, now they swing apart once again. An immense throng enters. They surround the throne of the Lamb, joyfully and gratefully singing the new canticle: "You were slain, and have redeemed us for God with Your blood, out of every tribe and tongue and people, and You have made us for our God a kingdom and priests."

Then the angels add their voices and all heaven echoes the jubilant refrain: "Worthy is the Lamb who was slain to receive divine power and wisdom, strength and honor, glory and praise." But for such acclamation even heaven itself is too small — all creatures must join as best they can, all in heaven and on earth and under the earth, those on the seas and in it, all must join the paean of praise: "To Him who sits upon the throne, and to the Lamb, blessing and honor and glory and dominion, forever and ever" (Apoc. 5:13). In these words St. John described Christ's heavenly glory.

To this very hour the gates of heaven remain open, awaiting our entrance. None of the tumult and clangor of Christ's enemies can be heard there. About the Holy City there is the most profound peace. No cloud mars the sky's deep blue, all is blessed peace and sweetest joy as far as the eye can see. This the kingdom of Christ in its full and final state. And this kingdom has been prepared for me.

Shortly before her death St. Augustine spoke to his mother on the beauty of heaven. Under the impact of his words her spirit rose ever higher unto God until the world and its goods lost all appeal (Confessions, Bk. 9, ch. 10). This same world shortly before had held St. Augustine so firmly in its clutches. Today's feast likewise urges us to lift up our hearts to God — *Sursum corda* — that the world with all its allurements may lose its appeal.

We build so permanently here
And are but guest and stranger.
And where we sigh to be for ere,
We build so little there.

3. Scripture Reading (2 Pet. 2:1 — 3:18). St. Peter is writing against certain heretics who denied Christ's second coming simply because it had not yet taken place. "This first you must know, that in the last days there will be some deceitful scoffers, men walking according to their own lusts, saying: Where is the promise or His coming? For since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were from the beginning of creation." He then calls attention to two facts, the deluge and God's great patience.

SIXTH WEEK AFTER EASTER

This Sunday occurs during the week after the feast of the Ascension and is transitional to the feast of Pentecost, which will be solemnly observed a week from today. Perhaps we may express it this way: in today's liturgy the Ascension mystery recedes into the background as we prepare for Pentecost. In the Middle Ages this Sunday became known as Rose Sunday, because the season's first roses were brought to church. (Rose Sunday, of Christian antiquity — in Italy, of course — was the fourth Sunday of Lent, Laetare Sunday.) Upon entering the house of God we no longer see the paschal Candle alongside the altar. It has been removed, and will not be lighted again except at the blessing of baptismal water on the Saturday before Pentecost.

SIXTH SUNDAY AFTER EASTER

I seek Your face, O Lord

1. **Preliminary Remarks.** On the feast of the Ascension our happiness stemmed from beholding Christ's triumph and sensing the elevation of human nature to a new high dignity. Fervently we petitioned to live in heaven. There was no trace of sorrow or sadness over the departure of the Lord.

Today, however, it is otherwise. In her heart the Church is yearning for the Lord, feels the pangs of separation. We can best sense the spirit of today's liturgy by recalling the spirit of the small Christian community between the departure of the Lord and the descent of the Holy Spirit. a) The Church yearns for Christ (Intr., Comm.), and directs her gaze upward to her heavenly King (Grad.); b) she awaits the Holy Ghost (Gosp.) with prolonged prayer (Intr.); c) she scans the future and arouses within herself the spirit of the martyrs and confessors (Epist., Gosp.).

2. **Holy Mass (Exaudi Domine).** A simple, childlike piety pervades today's formulary; little of the liturgy's usual terse clarity is noticeable. A ringing joyfulness characterized the Masses on the last few Sundays, there was hardly a note of sorrow over the Savior's departure; today there is quiet reminiscing, and holy sentiment envelops us. In the prayers there is unusual warmth and tenderness, as on the Sunday within the octave of Christmas.

The difference becomes apparent immediately at the *Introit*: no rejoicing, no praise; only a longing plea to see the face of the Lord. It is the yearning of the primitive Christians for the parousia — in an "alleluia" setting. On the feast of the Ascension the angels said to the disciples who were gazing toward heaven, "He shall come again in the same way as you have seen Him going up to heaven." Already today we pray with them: *Maranatha* — Come, Lord Jesus! (The entire psalm fosters this mood.)

It is easy to see why the *Kyrie* is a genuine exile song; almost forgotten during the paschal season, it comes to our lips more naturally again since the Rogation days. As the words, "Who is seated at the Father's right hand," occur in the *Gloria*, our hearts beat with special love and longing for our Beloved enthroned in heaven.

The *Oration* brings us back to earth as we beg for the grace to lead a true Christian life: "Grant that our wills may be ever devoted to You, and that we may serve Your Majesty with a sincere heart." There is a profound lesson in these words, giving as they do the nucleus of all piety. Put into practice, the petition calls for acts which demand the highest degree of virtue. Among such we may number Abraham's willingness to sacrifice his son; Mary's momentous decision, "Be-

The picture may represent Christ or the Christian soul. A passage in Job reads: "Will the eagle mount up at your command, and make her nest in high places? She abides among the rocks, and dwells among cragged flints and stony hills where there is no access. From thence she looks for the prey, and her eyes behold afar off." The Church fathers applied this passage to the Redeemer. Just as the eagle swoops down on its prey from some high crag and carries it on high, so Christ came from the heights of heaven, snatched the souls of men from the captivity of the devil through His death on the Cross, and ascends with them into heaven. Hence, the picture is most appropriate during the octave of the Ascension when we pray in the Alleluia verse: "The Lord comes from Sinai to His sanctuary, He ascends on high, leading captivity captive, alleluia." As individuals also we should resemble the eagle, and lift our hearts above earthly affections to God on high. Our petition on the feast is "that we too may live in heaven with our hearts."

hold the handmaid of the Lord"; Christ in agony pleading that the chalice might pass from Him, but only in accord with His Father's will; His complete submission to the Father, "My meat is to do the will of Him who sent Me"; or the daily prayer of countless saintly Christians, "Thy will be done."

Peter, Christ's first vicar on earth, now addresses the Christian community. He urges us to a fuller participation in the communion of the Church, to common prayer, to charity in giving and forgiving. He assures us that the charisms and ministries in the Church serve the extension of the mystical Body. These activities are the operations of the Holy Ghost, the soul of Christ's mystical Body, and to Him is due its development.

Emotion runs high in today's *Alleluia.* Our eyes, lifted longingly toward heaven, see the Lord Jesus seated there as King at the Father's right hand. Benevolently He bows to console us, "I will not leave you orphans; I will come to you, and your hearts will rejoice." This promise will be fulfilled at the parousia; but we have a foretaste of its fulfillment now in the Gospel as well as in holy Communion. Such is our relationship to Christ. We envision Him sitting at the right hand of the Father, while in the liturgy He returns again and again to rejoice our hearts.

Two points are stressed in the *Gospel.* The Holy Ghost will come, He will bear witness and will manifest Himself in the Church; nevertheless, we too must witness to Christ. The apostles gave testimony through blood and martyrdom, we must testify through fidelity and love. Our testimony is submission, cheerful obedience to God (*Coll.*), charity and faithfulness to our vocation (*Epist.*).

Today's *Offertory* procession is a continuation of the Lord's triumph on Ascension; therefore we sing, "God is ascended with jubilee. . . ." It is an excellent opportunity to turn our thoughts to our last offertory procession, after death. On that occasion we will ascend with bread, wine, and incense — the noblest elements of our life; the bread of our vocation, the wine of suffering, the incense of prayer. Clearly and succinctly the *Secret* points to the fruit of the holy Sacrifice; in itself it is im-

maculate, and it should, in turn, purify us and "impart to our souls the strength of heavenly grace."

In the *Communion* our glance is again directed toward heaven and we hear conversation between Christ and His Father: Father, as long as I was with them on earth, I protected those whom You gave Me; but now when I am far from them, I will pray for them. He does not pray that God take them out of the world but that He protect them from evil. The Eucharist is the pledge and visible sign (sacrament) of this protection. The *Postcommunion* petitions that we cultivate a spirit of gratitude for gifts received; a grateful spirit is indeed a genuine earmark of true Christianity.

What a privileged person, the true follower of Christ! With his heart in heaven and feet on earth, he is ever ready to abandon this world although he remains conscious of present duty. Oh, that we all might follow his lead.

3. Divine Office. The Office for the feast of the Ascension is repeated. Two different saints, however, address us at Matins, saints who like Leo and Gregory, in some respects complement each other, viz., John, apostle and evangelist; Augustine, bishop and doctor.

a) St. John. This week we read St. John's three Epistles and that of St. Jude. Today we begin the first Epistle of St. John (1:1—2:6). Although there are some difficult verses, the passage contains a wealth of beautiful and inspiring thoughts. The beloved disciple's favorite theme, love of neighbor, runs through the entire letter like a golden thread. This letter possibly served as an introduction to his Gospel. In any case, with varying rhythm, both compositions develop the same motifs: light and darkness, truth and falsehood, life and death, spirit and flesh, God and the world, faith and unbelief.

"I write of what was from the beginning, what we have heard, what we have seen with our eyes, what we have looked upon and our hands have handled: of the Word of Life. And the Life was made known and we have seen, and now testify and announce to you, the Life Eternal which was with the Father, and has

appeared to us. What we have seen and have heard we announce to you, in order that you also may have fellowship with us, and that our fellowship may be with the Father, and with His Son Jesus Christ."

b) St. Augustine draws practical conclusions from the ascension mystery; *Sursum corda* is his topic. "Our Savior has ascended into heaven, beloved brethren, but let us not on that account be troubled here on earth. If our minds are there, we will have peace here. So let us now ascend spiritually with Christ that when His promised day will come, we may follow Him also with our bodies. We must not forget, brethren, that neither pride, nor avarice, nor impurity ascends with Christ; none of our vices will ascend with our Healer. Therefore, if we desire to follow Him, we must necessarily part with our sins and vices. For all such things hold us bound to earth as with fetters."

4. **Longing for Heaven.** In his dying hour Goethe asked to be given "great thoughts." Great and noble thoughts are abundantly provided by Mother Church. Looking in retrospect, we find that on practically every Sunday she has given us important principles from or for daily life. And although her doctrine is old and comes unasked for, it is noteworthy that most often it seems new and striking. Take, for instance, the Sundays since Easter. The first three were still enveloped, as it seemed, by the sacred incense of Easter eve, and their message imbedded in the paschal mystery — resurrection, blood and water, the Good Shepherd.

But on the following Sundays she led us as newly risen men out of God's house into the world, into the maelstrom of life. She told us that life and the world, that men and suffering would be the same as ever, but that we must now meet these old conditions with an entirely new approach. *Omnia nova*, "See, I make all things new," summarized the work of the paschal season. The teaching given on these Sundays was of great importance for everyday life, e.g., you are an alien upon earth, patience is a genuine Christian virtue, prayer is a mighty force against all types of evil.

Likewise today the Church provides an important message, summed up in the word "longing." During the course of our earthly life there is a tiny flame we must carefully tender and preserve lest it be extinguished. This is the flame of longing for the return of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Ask yourself seriously: do you really long for the life hereafter? If you were now faced with the choice to remain on earth or to die and be with Christ, would you truthfully, unhesitatingly choose the latter? Too frequently even good and virtuous persons lack real desire for heaven. In its stead there is fear of judgment and attachment to earthly things. This attitude is founded on a purely individualistic piety that has lost one of the principal dogmas of the ancient Church.

Classify Catholics today. There are those whose whole life is occupied with the consciousness of sin and the struggle against it. And there are those who deploy all their time and effort on externals, on welfare work and organizations, who are so preoccupied with the care of souls that they experience no desire to be dissolved and be with Christ. They seem to imply that without their help God could not expand His kingdom or transform stones into children of Abraham!

These, then, may be the two reasons why so few feel a deep longing for union with the returning Savior: first, an overpowering consciousness of sin; secondly, an exaggerated emphasis on religious activity. My observations apply, of course, only to zealous Christians, for it is self-evident that the lukewarm experience no longing for Christ.

We now ask, in what manner may a yearning for the Lord be acquired and developed? On this point there is need to be realistic and truthful, deceiving neither ourselves nor others. Longing for the Lord will come naturally to a soul that centers its affections upon heaven, its true home. Let us draw a comparison with earthly longing. When a person yearns for his home, we call it homesickness. A child will want its parents, a bride her lover. This desire can become so intense as to cause actual illness. It is not easily blunted by distraction or by work. Like a dull but

sweet pain it is ever present, to surface at any lull in the day's noise and bustle.

What is involved or implied in this longing? Primarily a good which, though absent, is intensely loved and highly treasured. So the question arises: why do we feel so little longing for Christ and for heaven? Is heaven not our home? Are we not in a strange country, in exile, in misery? Are we not far distant from Christ, our Bridegroom, and from the Father to whom we tender all our love? Why do we experience so little longing or homesickness for that toward which our whole life is focused?

In order to foster this spiritual longing, we must make our own its two component elements, viz., an absent good which, in turn, is deeply loved. In other words, our spiritual center of gravity must be transferred from earth to heaven, from the Ego to Christ. Earthly, egocentric piety must become a heavenly, Christocentric piety.

First and foremost, we must acquire a greater knowledge and a deeper realization of what redemption means. We are God's children, "but if children, then also heirs of God and coheirs of Christ." We must not fall victim to a spiritual inferiority complex, feeling ourselves always as heaven's stepchildren. No one, of course, may become presumptuous and consider himself already a saint; for of ourselves we are only wretched sinners. But Christ covers our deficiencies, and in Him we become the "holy people of God." Subjective piety with its exaggerated emphasis on sin has been responsible for making us fear the life to come and for robbing us of homesickness for heaven. Cultivate, therefore, a joyful awareness of your redemption, and a longing for the Lord Jesus will find its way gently into your soul.

Nor can one foster a desire for heaven when constantly engaged in external activities. To the point is the argument between the two sisters, Martha and Mary. Christ decided the case in favor of the latter. "Martha, Martha, you are anxious and troubled about many things; and yet only one thing is needful. Mary has chosen the best part, and it will not be taken from her."

Too many of us are excessively subjective, and overly active. Our organizational programs kill the very organism they serve; our wholesale activities choke off the breath of life. We seem to think that God needs our planning and our promotion, otherwise nothing would perhaps happen. And in our hurry, confidence in God and in His grace is lost, and the tender little plant of yearning for heaven is trampled under foot. It is not a tent that can speedily be folded up that we are building, but a house of brick and stone, and our hope is that it be permanent. But with this mentality, what becomes of the desire to "be dissolved and be with Christ"?

Before the joyful Easter season comes to an end, Mother Church therefore addresses this lesson to us from the depths of her heart: Children, do not let the distractions of life extinguish your homesickness for Christ, for heaven. Look up to me, your Mother, for a model. Night and day my eyes are longingly lifted toward my Spouse as I eagerly await the moment when He will call me to the eternal nuptials. As earnestly as you possibly can, pray with me today's Introit: "Hear my cry, Lord, for I am calling You, alleluia. My heart speaks out to You: I seek Your face. Yes, Lord, I seek Your face — do not turn away from me, alleluia, alleluia."

Mother Church, enkindle in me the fire of your holy longing!

MONDAY AFTER ASCENSION

Old Testament types of the Ascension

Again today we may listen to three great saints, the apostle John, the golden-mouthed Chrysostom, and Pope St. Gregory the Great.

1. **Christ's Ascension.** St. John Chrysostom, the most illustrious preacher of patristic times, discourses on our Savior's ascension, focusing attention on the exaltation of human nature.

"Upon ascending into heaven, Christ offered the first-fruits of human nature to the Father who marvelled at the gift because of the surpassing dignity of Him who offered it, and, because the offering itself was not defiled in any manner. Then with His own hands He accepted the oblation and placed it upon His very throne, even at His own right hand.

"We should realize who this was who heard the words: Sit at My right hand; and to what nature God said: Share My throne with Me. For it is no other than that which once heard the sentence: Dust you are and unto dust you shall return. It did not suffice that this nature should enter heaven radiant with glory, it did not suffice to stand among the angels. But rising through the heavens and ascending above the cherubim, it was carried upwards beyond the seraphim, and did not rest until it had attained the throne of God.

"Behold the great space between earth and sky, between the world and hell below. Imagine the distance from one heaven to the next, and from the highest to the realm where angels dwell, and from there to the very throne of God. Through all these immense distances our nature was raised so that man who had fallen so low that he could go no lower was raised to so lofty a seat that he could rise no higher."

St. Gregory takes Enoch and Elias as two Old Testament types of Christ's ascension, and by comparison brings out very beautifully the superiority of the latter. "We read that Elias rode away on a chariot. This evidently shows that, being a mere man, he needed outside assistance, and such assistance came to him from angels and in a visible manner. For by his own power Elias could not even leave the ground, weighed down as he was by the weakness of human nature.

"But in the account of our Savior's ascension, there is no mention that He lifted Himself up by means of a chariot, or with the assistance of angels. For He who made all things would lift Himself up above all things by His own power. Indeed, He was only returning to the place where He already was, and where He departed from, He always remained; for while He ascended

to heaven in His human nature, in His divine nature He embraced both the heavens and the earth. Joseph, sold by his brothers, prefigured the Redeemer sold for thirty pieces; likewise Enoch who was transported to another place, and Elias who was carried up into the heavens foreshadowed the Savior's ascension. And thus there were two heralds and witnesses of this event, one before the Law was given and the other under the Law, so that at the appointed time He could come who would truly enter heaven."

2. **Scripture Reading (1 John 2:1—3:24).** "Do not love the world, or the things that are in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him; because all that is in the world is the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life; which is not from the Father, but from the world. And the world with its lust is passing away, but he who does the will of God abides forever."

"Behold what manner of love the Father has bestowed upon us, that we should be called children of God; and such we are. This is why the world does not know us, because it did not know Him. Beloved, now we are the children of God, and it has not yet appeared what we shall be. We know that, when He appears, we shall be like to Him, for we shall see Him just as He is. And everyone who has this hope in him makes himself holy, just as He also is holy."

TUESDAY AFTER ASCENSION

The eagle's flight on high

The apostle John and Pope Gregory the Great have addressed us frequently; but we hardly recognize the holy bishop Maximus. St. Maximus governed the see of Turin during the middle of the fifth century; one of his homilies occurred on January 10.

1. **The Ascension.** Bishop Maximus compares our Lord's ascension to the soaring flight of an eagle. "Beloved, you may recall that I have compared our Blessed Savior to the eagle about which we read in the Psalter that it renews its youth. Actually there is much truth in this comparsion. See how the eagle forsakes the earth's dust and seeks the lofty heights close to heaven! So too the Savior left the underworld, scanned the lofty heights of paradise, and penetrated heaven's inmost recesses. And as the eagle contemns the sordid earth to soar on high and enjoy the healthful currents of the pure, upper air, so the Lord, forsaking the world's filthiness and sin, ascended on the wings of His saints and rejoices in the innocence of a purer life.

"Thus comparing the Savior to an eagle holds true on many points. But what about the fact that the eagle is a bird of prey and often snatches what belongs to others? Not even here does the simile break down. For He too snatched prey, one may say, when He tore mankind — whose nature He assumed — from the jaws of hell, and bore it to heaven; what belonged to another, namely, slaves, under Satan's power, He freed from captivity and led away captive on high. For the prophet had written: Ascending on high, He led captivity captive; He gave gifts to men. Ascending on high, he said, He led captivity captive.

"How beautifully the prophet described Christ's triumph! Formerly it was the custom that captives precede a king's chariot in the triumphal march. But see how the Lord ascends to heaven — no resplendent band of captives precede Him, they accompany Him; in fact, they themselves carry their Savior. A mystery indeed! Just as the Son of God bears the Son of Man to heaven, so the band of captives bears their Conqueror and is in turn borne up by Him."

St. Gregory sees a problem in the positions ascribed to Jesus after He had ascended to the right hand of God. "Now let us ponder why St. Mark says: He *sits* at the right hand of God, while St. Stephen exclaimed: I see the heavens opened, and the Son of Man *standing* at the right hand of God. Why did Mark see Him sitting while Stephen saw Him standing?

"Now you know, brethren, that a sitting position is proper to those who give judgment, but a standing posture is assumed when one fights or aids someone who is fighting. Mark, therefore, ascribes a sitting posture to our Redeemer; for after His ascension into heaven He judges all things, and on the last day will come as the Judge of heaven and earth. Stephen, in the din of battle, saw Jesus standing because He was giving assistance in the struggle. For never would Stephen have overcome the treachery of his persecutors on earth, had not Christ fought for him from heaven."

2. **Scripture Reading (1 John 4:1–21).** The disciple whom Jesus loved continues his favorite topic. "Beloved, let us love one another, for love is from God. And everyone who loves is born of God, and knows God."

"In this is the love, not that we have loved God, but that He has first loved us, and sent His Son, a propitiation for our sins. Beloved, if God has so loved us, we also ought to love one another."

"God is love, and he who abides in love abides in God, and God in him."

"If anyone says: I love God, and hates his brother, he is a liar. For how can he who does not love his brother, whom he sees, love God, whom he does not see? And this commandment we have from Him, that he who loves God should love his brother also." These words should be written in letters of gold!

WEDNESDAY AFTER ASCENSION

The King of glory would enter

In addition to the apostle John, we may hear today a discourse by St. Gregory of Nyssa, a representative of the Eastern Church, and a homily by Pope Gregory the Great, a Western Church father.

1. **The Ascension.** St. Gregory of Nyssa gives us a good example of how to accommodate a psalm to a dogmatic theme. "The prophet David contributes to the glory of today's feast, one that is already grand enough in itself, by enhancing it with a psalm (Ps. 23). For in spirit this sublime prophet raises himself above the earth as though he were no longer constrained by the burden of a body, walks about among the heavenly powers and reveals to us their songs. He hears the angelic hosts that accompanied the Lord on His return to heaven commanding those angels who remain on earth with the task of guiding men: Lift up your gates, O princes, and be lifted up, O eternal gates, for the King of glory would enter.

"Now the Lord, in whom all things are contained, accommodates Himself to the natures of those about Him (for not only did He become a Man among men, but when among angels He condescends to their method of speaking). Accordingly the guards at heaven's gate call out: Who is this King of glory? And the answer comes with proofs: The Lord, strong and mighty; the Lord, victorious in battle! It is He who was sent to fight him who kept human nature captive, to overthrow him who held sway over the empire of death; and having triumphed over man's meanest foe, His task was to restore peace and liberty on earth. The guards hasten to meet Him, they order the gates to be opened and that due honor and glory be given Him.

"He is clothed, however, with the lowly robe of humanity, and therefore they do not recognize Him. His garments, moreover, are besmirched with blood from the wine press of human misery. Once again they ask those in the royal train: Who is this King of glory? But now they do not reply: One strong and mighty in battle. Rather: The Lord of hosts! He who is the world's sovereign, He who has drawn all things to Himself and has restored all things to their former state — He indeed is the King of glory."

2. **Scripture Reading (2 John).** This short letter was written for pastoral purposes by the aged apostle to a certain Christian

community. St. John calls himself "the presbyter" (i.e., the senior), because he alone of the twelve apostles was still alive. The letter contains an exhortation to charity and a warning against false teachers. John refers to the community as "Lady," and to the Christians as "her children"; for every community is a model in miniature of the Church, Christ's Bride and the Mother of all the faithful.

"I rejoiced greatly that I found some of your children walking in truth, according to the commandment that we have received from the Father. And now I beseech you, lady, not as writing you a new commandment, but that which we have had from the beginning, that we love one another. And this is love, that we walk according to His commandments. This is the commandment, that, just as you have heard from the beginning, you should walk in it. For many deceivers have gone forth into the world who do not confess Jesus as the Christ coming in the flesh. This is the deceiver and the Antichrist. Look to yourselves, that you do not lose what you have worked for, but that you may receive a full reward. Anyone who advances and does not abide in the doctrine of Christ, has not God; he who abides in the doctrine, he has both the Father and the Son."

3. **Preparing for Confirmation.** Every year at Pentecost we should stir up and become concerned over the graces we once received in confirmation. Three of the seven sacraments imprint an indelible mark upon the soul, viz., baptism, confirmation, and holy orders. Baptism changes the individual into a child of God and an heir of heaven; confirmation makes him a soldier of Christ; while holy orders raises him to the rank of an officer and leader in God's kingdom. Here lies the reason why these sacraments are so extremely important in developing and organizing the Church as well as in assigning special functions to individual members.

What does confirmation effect? The word (from *confirmo*, to strengthen) already indicates an elevation to a higher status in the Body mystical, to a degree of maturity. Confirmation

makes one an adult spiritually. Each of the three above mentioned sacraments brings the individual into a unique relationship with the Holy Spirit. In baptism he becomes a temple wherein the Holy Spirit begins to dwell; through holy orders he becomes a special instrument of the Holy Spirit, and receives a share in the divine power of blessing, consecrating, and absolving.

Confirmation stands midway between baptism and holy orders. On the one hand, it effects a more intimate indwelling of the Holy Spirit in the soul; and on the other, it renders possible a certain participation in priestly work under the special guidance of the Holy Spirit. The efficacy of confirmation can be summed up in three words: it makes the Christian a knight, a martyr, and a priest.

A knight. Baptism makes us children of God. As long as a child is under the loving protection of its parents, it experiences little of the trials of life. But when it sallies forth into the world, strife and trouble immediately rise up to vex him. It is the same in the kingdom of God. As soon as the child reaches the age of reason, its carefree days are over, and fiends arise to kill the life of grace within his soul. Satan, the world, and lower nature conspire to turn the child away from God.

But the child of God is not left to fight alone; he is given assistance and about him are comrades in arms. Through the sacrament of confirmation he becomes a knight, and the Holy Ghost supplies weapons both for defense and offense. He is formally enrolled in the army of the Church militant and supplied with the equipment St. Paul described in such detail: "Take up the armor of God, that you may be able to resist in the evil day, and stand in all things perfect. Stand, therefore, having girded your loins with truth, and having put on the breastplate of justice, and having your feet shod with the readiness of the Gospel of peace, in all things taking up the shield of faith, with which you may be able to quench all the fiery darts of the most wicked one. And take unto you the helmet of salva-

tion and the sword of the spirit, that is, the word of God" (Eph. 6:13ff).

At confirmation the Holy Ghost arms the Christian with these weapons so that he may "fight the good fight" and "receive the crown of life."

THURSDAY AFTER ASCENSION

Christ ascends into heaven with all the redeemed

1. **Ascension and the Anamnesis.** Christ's return to His heavenly Father is so full of mystery and consolation that holy Church would bring it to our minds again and again, even in the texts of every Mass. Therefore she has placed certain reminders of the event at strategic points in the liturgy, lest we forget so important a truth. For instance, after the consecration

at Mass the priest recites an ancient and venerable prayer that is linked with Christ's command to "do this in remembrance of Me." It reads as follows: "Wherefore, O Lord, we Your servants and likewise Your holy people, remembering not only the blessed passion of the same Christ Your Son, our Lord, but also His resurrection from the dead, and finally His glorious ascension into heaven. . . ."

Daily at Mass the Church bids us to remember the mystery of our feast; indeed, our "remembering" makes present by mystery and grace the great redemptive acts of our holy religion. Now that our Lord is enthroned in heaven, our eyes are continually lifted up toward Him. We behold Him "seated at the right hand of God"; and we profess our belief in the Gloria, the Credo, and in the concluding words of every official prayer: "through our Lord Jesus Christ, Your Son, who lives and *reigns* with You. . . ." Finally, the *Sursum corda* reminds us daily that it is not enough to believe in the ascension of Jesus, we must make its implications affect our mode of living; our hearts must dwell in heaven.

2. **Divine Office.** Again today three illustrious men, Paul, Augustine, Gregory, seek to speak to us on the mystery of the ascension.

a) Paul (Eph. 4:1–21). This particular excerpt from the letter to the Ephesians is important because it gives an authentic accommodation of a verse from Psalm 67: "Ascending on high, He led captivity captive; He gave gifts to men." St. Paul applies these words to Christ's ascension. The verse occurs repeatedly in the feast's liturgy. The apostle indicates in some detail the nature of the gifts distributed by the heavenly Conqueror.

b) Augustine shows how our Savior's ascension is a pledge of heavenly gifts. "All those marvels that our Lord Jesus Christ performed in this world while clothed in our fragile flesh, benefit us spiritually. For example, when He ascended in our human nature beyond the stars, He taught that heaven was opened to believers; and when He lifted the Conqueror over death (i.e., His holy Humanity) to the heights of heaven, He showed to

us — who likewise should conquer — the road on which to follow Him.

"The Lord's ascension accordingly serves to confirm the faith of Catholics; in the future we will accept with confidence that marvellous grace (i.e., our own ascension), the effects of which we have already experienced. Furthermore, let everyone who has been so richly blessed, use past blessings to strengthen hope in the promises of God. And may God's goodness to him in the past and present be a guarantee of future blessings."

c) Pope Gregory the Great gives an interesting allegorical explanation of a passage in the Canticle of Canticles: See, He comes, leaping over the mountains, skipping upon the hills. "Enlightened by the Spirit, Solomon beheld the principal events in God's work of redemption when he said: See, He comes, leaping over the mountains. For when our Savior came to redeem us, He indeed made certain leaps — if I may use these words. Do you wish to know what these were, beloved brethren? From heaven He leapt to Mary's womb, from the womb to the crib, from the crib to the Cross, from the Cross to the tomb, and from the tomb He returned to heaven. Behold, in order to draw us after Him the incarnate God did this leaping; in fact, *He rejoiced as a giant who runs his course* in order that we could cry out to Him from the depths of our hearts: Draw us, we will run after You in the odor of Your ointments."

3. **Confirmation Graces.** *Anointed unto martyrdom.* Before His ascension Christ said to His apostles, "You shall be witnesses for me in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria and even to the very ends of the earth" (Acts 1:8). The Greek word for witness is *martyr*. A martyr, therefore, is a witness for Christ, and to be a martyr is part of our Christian vocation. We must be witnesses for Christ through how we act and live, by obeying the commandments, by our speech both in private and public, by boldly professing our faith. In the face of the Church's foes we must testify for Christ, even if this implies being mocked and persecuted.

This role of witnessing is fulfilled most perfectly by shedding

one's blood and giving up one's life in His behalf. This is the first meaning of the word *martyr*; but no Christian escapes some version of martyrdom. Where do we obtain the strength to confess Christ before men? The Holy Ghost imparts it to us in confirmation. May the heroic martyr-spirit of the ancient Church fill the hearts of present-day Christians; for this purpose the Holy Spirit anoints us with the graces of courage and fortitude in the sacrament of confirmation.

Lay Priesthood. Christ gave the Church a priesthood that partakes of His own high-priesthood in a very special manner, and to it He entrusted the care and administration of the mysteries of God. In addition to this special priesthood there is a priesthood common to all Christians. To the point St. Peter says: "You, however, are a chosen race, *a royal priesthood*, a holy nation" (1 Pet. 2:9). Obviously, then, every Christian is a priest and shares in the priesthood of Christ. This priesthood is exercised when he offers the holy Sacrifice in union with and under the direction of an ordained priest, when he takes part in the various acts of cult that the Church offers to God. The Church is not satisfied with mere physical presence and passive assistance, she desires active participation in the Mass and in her other official services.

The Christian also exercises his priesthood by ministering to the spiritual needs of his fellowmen, and by furthering the spread of the kingdom of God. We receive this priesthood in baptism, and again in greater measure through the anointing with holy chrism in the sacrament of confirmation. In a special manner chrism is the symbol and visible sign of the Holy Spirit; the Church uses it to clothe her children "with the dignity of king, priest and prophet, and the garment of unsullied grace" (Consecratory Prayer used on Holy Thursday).

Christian, be mindful of the dignity that is yours! Because of the singular importance of confirmation in the life of a Christian, it is ordinarily administered by the bishop. For only bishops receive the full power of Christ, and through them the Holy Spirit operates in the most effective manner.

FRIDAY OF THE SIXTH WEEK AFTER EASTER

Ascension — Pentecost

1. Ascension — Pentecost. Today's Mass and Office follow the pattern with which we have become familiar since the feast of the Ascension — our thoughts are with Christ in heaven as we await the coming of His Spirit. Our minds are filled with further edifying reflections as we continue yesterday's sermon by St. Augustine. "If it was not in our flesh that our Savior triumphed over the devil, then His battle was mere stage play with no victory to our good. If He did not rise again in human flesh, no benefit was conferred upon humanity by His resurrection. But anyone who argues in this way does not understand the purpose of the Incarnation. If Christ did not accomplish the redemption in our flesh, then His human birth was mere indignity. But let any such dangerous notions be far from our minds. He took from us that which He laid down for us (a mortal body), while that which He gave to us, belonged to Him. It was my body that died in order that it would be my body that rose again; truly it was my body that lay in the tomb in order that it would be my body that ascended into heaven."

St. Augustine's homily on last Sunday's Gospel (found in the now no longer used third Nocturn) contains some excellent material on the work of the Holy Spirit. "He will bear witness concerning Me; and you also will bear witness. Now the strength needed to bear witness will be given you by the love of God that is poured forth in your hearts by the Holy Spirit who will be given to you.

"This strength certainly was still lacking in Peter when, frightened by the maidservant's question, he failed in testifying rightly; and stricken by fear he thrice denied his own solemn promise. Such fear as this does not abide with love, while perfect love casts out fear. Before the passion a servant's question occasioned Peter's servile fear, but after the resurrection he

declared his love when questioned by the Prince of love. Confusion was his on the first occasion, peace on the second. Once he disowned Him whom he loved, now he loved Him whom he had disowned. However, his love was still frail and weak for it had not yet been strengthened and confirmed by the Holy Ghost."

2. **Scripture Reading (3 John).** The third epistle of St. John differs from the second in that it is a private letter. It provides us with a glimpse of the difficulties besetting an early Christian community. When problems face us, when evil makes its appearance among the elect in the community, it is consoling to know that even the primitive Christians were not all saints!

We meet two types of Christians in the letter: Gaius, a man of virtue, and Diotrephes, an unworthy bishop. To Gaius he writes: "Beloved, I pray that in all things you may prosper and be in health, even as your soul prospers. I rejoiced greatly when some brethren came and bore witness to your truth, even as you walk in the truth. I have no greater joy than to hear that my children are walking in the truth."

3. **Christ and Christians.** Before the week is over, let us look back once more at last Sunday's Mass. Its text, revolving about two poles of emphasis, tells us much about Christ and Christians.

a) The Christian. Six attributes are predicated of every good Christian: he longs for Christ and has a grateful heart; he is submissive, always most willing to obey God; he loves his neighbor, conscientiously fulfills the duties of his state in life, and courageously professes his faith. These virtues make the true Christian. The first is that of longing. Since the day Jesus left this world, the Christian suffers from homesickness for heaven. A pilgrim, he has on earth no lasting dwelling. For him misfortunes are blessings in disguise; they do not disturb him or make him weary of life. Quite the contrary, he is deeply grateful; he knows that he is no stepchild, for he has received the greatest blessing possible to a human being, divine sonship. Even though

God may strike him, even though he may not comprehend, the true Christian is grateful "always and in all places." Yearning and gratitude, then, are two basic traits of the true Christian.

It is necessary, moreover, that the foundations of one's spiritual life rest upon a rock, God's holy will. To serve God, humbly bowing one's own will, is the supreme law for the child of God. Filial reverence together with fear of his heavenly Father come naturally to him. Christ's own wonderful example is a constant inspiration, "My meat is to do the will of My Father."

Love of neighbor and fulfillment of one's duty are likewise necessary. "Above all things have a constant mutual charity among yourselves; for charity covers a multitude of sins." Unfortunately we modern Christians are so little concerned about charity; yet it is "His commandment," and without it we are "as sounding brass or a tinkling cymbal."

How beautifully St. Peter spoke of vocation graces: "According to the gift that each has received, administer it to one another as good stewards of the manifold grace of God. . . . If anyone ministers, let it be as from the strength that God furnishes; that in all things God may be honored through Jesus Christ." Here is the Christian approach to the concept of vocation! We are merely users of the grace of God! Not as isolated individuals but as members of Christ's mystical Body do we fulfill our obligations. Our motive is service to others, our goal God's glory.

Lastly, a true Christian must profess his faith in Christ. "You shall be witnesses for Me." Witnessing means suffering, witnessing means readiness for martyrdom, whatever be its form. Such in outline the model Christian. Do I conform to type?

b) Christ. How should we visualize Christ after His ascension? What relation does He bear to us? The Mass text gives the answer. See Him sitting as King at God's right hand, deeply interested in us, interceding for us with the Father; He sends the Holy Spirit, and comes personally among us through the liturgy.

First, we should see Christ as King, *Qui sedes ad dexteram*

patris. This is how the liturgy beholds our Savior. Not as the Prisoner of Love in the tabernacle, not as the Man of Sorrows on the Cross, not even as the Babe of Bethlehem! The Christ to whom we pray and to whom we belong is the glorified and exalted King at the right hand of the Father in heaven. There He is continuing His priesthood and His kingship. He is our Mediator with the Father, He rules over us, He guides us. The Holy Ghost comes at His bidding. As long as the Holy Ghost remains on earth, Christ appears only in the sacred mysteries, and transiently. He is present in the word of God, in the Gospel, in the sacraments, in the holy Sacrifice, but in a passing manner. Nevertheless, it is the liturgy's noble role to give us Christ.

VIGIL OF PENTECOST

Station at St. John Lateran

1. **Orientation.** Today is the solemn eve of the great feast of Pentecost. A vigil always implies preparation, a time for cleansing and adorning the soul before the feast. Two themes occupy our attention: a) baptism; b) the graces of Pentecost.

In spirit we stand at the font of our baptism to stir up the graces that we once received. There we read the pointed words that St. Augustine addressed to a class of neophytes. "Today

with the greatest joy Mother Church will give birth to you through holy baptism. By the most sacred sign of the Cross she conceived you in her womb, there she nourishes you and joyfully brings you, her joyful children, to the day of birth. In the holy bath of baptism true light is restored to you.

"Mother Church is not affected by the punishment inflicted upon Eve who must give birth to her children in pain and sorrow, nor do her children come into the world weeping as those of Eve; you are born with a cry of joy. . . . All the mystery-laden rites that have been performed over you (during your catechumenate) and are still being performed by the ministry of ordained priests, such as the exorcisms, prayers, spiritual songs (psalms), insufflations, penitential garb, bowing the head, prostrations, even the very fear that you experience — all these things are food which should enliven you in the womb so that when reborn in baptism, Mother Church may present you as joyful children to Christ.

"You have already received the Creed; this Creed is your mother's protection against the serpent's venom. In John the apostle's Apocalypse it is written that the dragon stood before the woman who was about to bring forth, that when she had brought forth he might devour her son (12:5). You all know that the dragon is the devil; also, that the woman represents the Virgin Mary, who a virgin herself, gave birth to our Virgin Head. She, moreover, is a type of holy Church; for as Mary remained a virgin in giving birth to a Son, so the Church remains virginal although constantly giving birth to new members.

"You have vowed to renounce the devil, and in this vow that has been recorded not by men but by God and His angels, you have declared: I do renounce him. Renounce him not merely with words, but in your conduct too; not only with the sound of the voice, but in the acts of daily life; not by the speech of lips alone, but with the loud cry of action. Remember that you have joined battle with a wily, skilled, and inveterate enemy; once you have renounced him, never let him discover his own handiwork in you lest he claim the right to drag you away into servi-

tude. For you shall be detected and brought to light, O Christian, whenever your deeds contradict your vow."

This passage, so redolent with the spirit of ancient Christianity, affords a profound commentary on the rite of baptism and could well serve as the subject for a meditation. The Doctor of Hippo draws a parallel between baptism and birth, and with good reason, for it is baptism that imparts divine life. At this time the ceremonies of baptism were not conferred at once as they are now, but in the course of several weeks or months. For that reason St. Augustine likens the process to the origin and development of a human embryo. The individual was enrolled in the catechumenate with the sign of the Cross, an act that is compared to the conception of new life. After conception, life must grow in the womb and be nourished by its mother's blood; this phase is represented by the rites and ceremonies which Mother Church performed over the neophyte during Lent. The solemn *traditio* of the Creed to those qualified for baptism constituted the antitoxin which counteracted the serpent's poison. A ringing exhortation to transform our baptismal vows into action brings the address to a close.

2. **Holy Mass.** On the eve of Pentecost baptism was formerly administered to those who because of sickness or other circumstances were unable to receive the sacrament at Easter. A liturgy parallel to that of Easter developed, with the reading of a series

BECAUSE OF THE HEAD, MEMBERS ARE GLADDENED BY THE HOPE OF ASCENDING + TO THE HEIGHTS

of prophecies and the solemn blessing of baptismal water. The Mass that followed continued the baptismal theme, but with a Pentecostal rather than an Easter frame of thought. Note the use of words like "love, fire, Spirit," in the place of "resurrection, life, light." The Mass begins with an excellent text from Ezechiel, "When I will show My holiness in you, I will gather you together out of all countries. I will pour upon you clean water and you will be cleansed from all your filthiness. A new Spirit will I give to you, alleluia, alleluia."

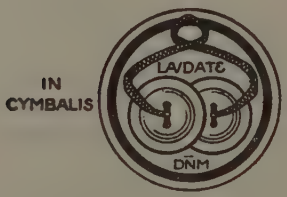
The *Oration* is a prayer-hymn filled with references to light: ". . . may the bright rays of Your radiant splendor shine upon us, and may the light of Your light by the illumination of the Holy Spirit strengthen the hearts of those who have been born again. . . ." Six words for light! Yet this will not seem strange if we remember that the vigil Mass was celebrated at night.

The *Epistle* recounts the episode at Ephesus when St. Paul baptized several disciples of St. John the Baptist. Thereupon "when Paul laid his hands on them, the Holy Spirit came upon them, and they began to speak in tongues and to prophesy." What happened there, happens at every confirmation. The visible phenomena are absent, but visible signs are not the principal consideration. The *Gospel* presents another excerpt on the Holy Ghost from our Lord's farewell discourse. What does Jesus tell us here? "The Father will give you another Advocate (or Comforter — the first was Christ) to dwell with you forever, the Spirit of truth. . . . You shall know Him, because He will dwell with you, and be in you." The "good news" in this passage is the assurance that the Holy Ghost will dwell personally within us forever. In Him we live, He is our life.

What the Church proposed in prophecy during the Fore-Mass, now comes to us as the fruit of the Sacrifice. That is why we pray so fervently at the *Offertory* for the descent of the Holy Ghost in the Eucharist. The *Secret* (the same as on the feast) is austerely concise, "Cleanse our hearts through the illumination of the Holy Spirit." The *Communion* assures us that we have be-

come living fountains of the Spirit. Like rain or a refreshing dew the Holy Spirit fructifies the soul (*Post.*).

3. **Scripture Reading.** Today we read St. Jude's entire letter. He inveighs against the heresies of the day and, with the last judgment in mind, urges the practice of Christian virtue. Note the apostle's strong, fresh phraseology, "These men are stains on their feasts; clouds without water, carried about by the winds; trees in the fall, unfruitful, twice dead, uprooted; wild waves of the seas, foaming up their shame; wandering stars, for whom the storm of darkness has been reserved forever. . . . But as for you, beloved, build up yourselves upon your most holy faith, praying in the Holy Spirit. Keep yourselves in the love of God, looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto life everlasting." What inspiration in a single passage!



THE GLORIOUS FEAST OF PENTECOST

Pentecost — from the Greek *pentekoste*, the fiftieth day — is Easter's double as well as its "jubilee octave" (i.e., $7 \times 7 + 1$). It brings the Easter season to a second climax. Pentecost, therefore, is not an independent feast; it is rather the seal or finale to Easter. If we do not overlook the fundamental differences, we might liken today's feast to that of Epiphany; for Epiphany bears a similar relationship to Christmas as Pentecost does to Easter.

The following comparison may help. At Easter Christ, the divine Sun, rose in splendor; it is high noon at Pentecost and He sheds upon His vineyard the bright, warm rays that redden and ripen.

Another comparison. At Easter the garden of the Church is abloom with beautiful blossoms, Christians newly baptized and confirmed. By Pentecost these blossoms have developed and

have matured into fruit, and now hang heavily upon the trees. The Gardener who tends the trees is our Savior Jesus Christ; the Sun that ripens the fruit is the Holy Ghost.

And a third comparison. At Easter we were born anew as children of God. Like infants we sought our Mother's nourishing milk, the holy Eucharist; carefree and happy we grew up in our Father's house. As we became older, Mother Church warned us that the happy time of childhood would pass. She taught us that we were strangers and pilgrims on this earth, that we must suffer and be patient (the third Sunday after Easter). Now at Pentecost we have come of age. Confirmation, the sacrament of spiritual adulthood, follows the same pattern.

Already in the old dispensation, Israel observed a festival called Pentecost, or the Feast of Weeks. It was a day of thanksgiving for the wheat harvest and also the annual memorial to the promulgation of the Law on Mt. Sinai. The old foreshadowed the new, now we are ~~are~~ observing the true harvest of souls.

Pentecost marks the actual founding of the Church. On the first Pentecost the Church began to expand. Today she stands before us, vigorous and youthful, ready to continue her earthly pilgrimage that will terminate only with the end of time.

Pentecost also marks the beginning of the work and activity of the Holy Spirit. Before His departure Jesus promised that He

would not leave us orphans. In His stead He would send the Paraclete, the Comforter, who would teach us all things, remind us of all things. In a most unique way Pentecost is the feast of the Holy Ghost; today His activity in the Church and in the souls of men should impress itself upon us anew. Give more attention to the Holy Spirit, He dwells in your soul; and since baptism He has made your body and soul His temple, a house of God. "Do you not know that you are the temple of God and that the Spirit of God dwells in you? Glorify God and bear Him in your body." What saintly lives we would lead if we would but remember that the Holy Spirit is within us!

Christ is in heaven; He is our Mediator there with the Father. But on earth His Church is guided and directed by the Holy Ghost. Christ is, indeed, present in the holy Eucharist, but He does not use His Eucharistic presence to continue the work He began in Palestine. That He leaves entirely to the Holy Spirit. In the Eucharist His only desire is to serve as sacrifice and sacrificial banquet. Yes, we may say that the holy Eucharist is really the means by which the Holy Spirit sanctifies and glorifies.

The Holy Ghost is the soul of the Church. The Church is Christ's mystical Body. In a living body there must be a soul; and the soul of the Church is the Holy Ghost. If only we would grasp this truth in all its implications! What does the soul do to your body? It gives life. As soon as the soul leaves the body, the body is dead, utterly incapable of feeling, thinking, acting in any way; in short, without a soul the body disintegrates. Now the Holy Ghost is the soul of that great Body, the Church. He is the principle of life for the Church as a single body and for every Christian as an individual cell. It is He who gives and preserves divine life in our souls; only through Him can we pray, only through Him can we act virtuously.

In each church there are places where the Holy Spirit is especially active, viz., the confessional, the pulpit, the altar. Invisibly the sacred Dove is always hovering there.

1) It is the Holy Ghost who gives the power to forgive sins. "Receive the Holy Spirit; whose sins you shall forgive, they are

forgiven them," our Savior said on the night after His resurrection. Obviously, it is by the operation of the Holy Ghost that the priest can relieve one of the burden of sin.

2) Preaching too is the work of the Holy Spirit. By faith we know that the sermon is not the ordinary speech of man; it is God's word. The priest loans, as it were, his tongue and his mouth to God. It is the Holy Spirit who preserves the Church free from error in her office of teaching.

3) Finally, holy Mass is the work *par excellence* of the Holy Ghost. Even as the incarnation of the Son of God was effected by the operation of the Holy Ghost ("conceived by the Holy Ghost"), so it is the Holy Ghost who now changes bread and wine into Christ's sacred body and blood. For this reason the Holy Ghost is called down upon the oblation at the Offertory. In ancient liturgies the Epiclesis (i.e., "calling down" of the Holy Ghost upon the Sacrifice) formed an essential part of the consecratory prayers.

Joy should fill our hearts to the very brim today as we celebrate the feast of Pentecost. On no other occasion do we hear the words, "Wherefore the whole world rejoices with unrestrained joy" (Preface). How fortunate we Christians are! Strong and firm is our faith in the presence and power of the Holy Spirit in the Church and in the soul! We feel His presence. However, neither the Church nor we are "perfected in love." So we must pray fervently, imploringly: "Come, Holy Ghost, fill the hearts of Your faithful!"

To celebrate Pentecost properly and becomingly, I must be convinced that the same miracle will take place mystically in my soul as occurred on the first Christian Pentecost. In the holy Sacrifice of Mass the Holy Ghost will be poured out upon me, one of God's predestined children.

PENTECOST SUNDAY

Station at St. Peter

Today the feast of Pentecost has come, alleluia.
Today the Holy Ghost appeared to the disciples in the form of fire and gave them charismatic gifts;
He sent them into the whole world to preach and bear witness: He who believes and is baptized shall be saved, alleluia!
(Magn. Ant. 2 Vesp.).

The holy feast of Pentecost, the day on which the Holy Ghost came down in the form of fiery tongues upon the disciples in Jerusalem (Martyrology).

The design. Mary enthroned as Queen of the apostles! She is the prototype of the *Ecclesia orans*, the praying Church of every age. Peter holds the symbol of his power; in each apostle the tongue of fire produces a different effect. The surrounding ornamentation recalls the Old Testament feast of Pentecost with its stress on the wheat harvest and the promulgation of the Law. The sheaves are signs of the spiritual harvest of souls soon to be reaped by the apostles. "Already the fields are white for the harvest" (John 4:35). They ripen swifty under the warming rays of the Holy Spirit.

Great feasts should be celebrated in closest union with the praying Church. The day should be sanctified by reciting the various hours of the Divine Office at their proper times. Holy Mass, of course, is the highest expression of the day's mystery. (It is taken for granted that copies of the Office for the principal feasts are at one's disposal.)

1. **Divine Office.** Today's feast, like any other in the Church's calendar, begins with first Vespers and ends with second Vespers. One evening service introduces the feast, the other bids it farewell. The various themes proper to Pentecost are proclaimed without delay at first Vespers, viz., the historical events at the first Pentecost, the work of the Holy Spirit, even baptism receives mention (fourth antiphon). The life-giving, creative activity of the Spirit is described in the hymn, while the Magnificat antiphon joyously points out Christ's return to His Church in the Person of the Paraclete.

What was briefly outlined in Vespers is developed and enlarged upon at Matins, the feast's prayer drama. As on Easter Matins have but one nocturn, and for the same reason; baptism was administered on the eve of Pentecost in the same solemn manner as on Easter eve. The time that remained permitted the recitation of only one nocturn. The three psalms of Matins form a pentecostal triptych. One panel depicts the historical background and meaning of the mystery; in the distance the sound of Pentecost's mighty wind is heard as we pray Psalm 47.

The second panel portrays the Holy Spirit's work in the Church. Psalm 67, perhaps the most obscure in the entire Psalter, describes the triumphal passage of the Ark of the Covenant through the desert to Sion in the Promised Land. From Sion, Yahweh, the God of the Covenant, extends His dominion over the entire world. This universal sovereignty is now exercised by Christ and His Church through the operation of the Holy Spirit.

On the third panel we see the new creation wrought by the Holy Ghost. Psalm 103 is a poetic rendition of the Creation Account in Genesis. The glory of visible creation is a picture

and type of that invisible spiritual creation which the Holy Ghost brings into being in the soul and in the Church.

The lessons of Matins are taken from a sermon of St. Gregory the Great delivered on Pentecost at St. Peter's, Rome, more than thirteen centuries ago. From these readings we gather that the same Epistle and Gospel as occur in the Mass formulary today formed part of the Pentecost service at and before his time (c. 600). "And My Father will love him, and We will come to him and make Our abode with him. Consider, dearest brethren, how great a privilege it is to have God come into one's heart as a guest. If a wealthy or influential friend were coming to your house, would you not hurry and tidy the house thoroughly, in order that there would be nothing offensive to his eyes when he entered? In the same way, if you are preparing the house of your mind to receive God, remove the filth of evil deeds.

"Now look closely at what Truth Itself said: We will come and make Our abode with him. For God indeed enters certain hearts, but He does not dwell there; such persons, by contrition, gain God's attention, but in time of temptation they forget the very acts for which they were sorry. Accordingly, they continue to commit those sins as if they had never bewailed them."

In Lauds, the Church's early morning prayer, joyous sentiments of praise over visible creation unite with similar sentiments over the spiritual creation effected by the Holy Ghost.

Of the Little Hours Terce (recited ordinarily about nine o'clock in the morning) has a special significance today; for it was precisely at this hour that the Paraclete first descended upon the apostles. It is for this reason that throughout the year Terce is dedicated to the Holy Ghost (note how the hymn invokes His aid). On Pentecost and each day during its octave, the beautiful hymn *Veni, Creator* bestows added distinction upon the Hour.

2. **Holy Mass (Spiritus Domini).** Guided by New Testament chronology, the Church on this fiftieth day after Easter assembles her children in the "Upper Room" of the house of God at the "third hour" (or Terce — the Hour dedicated to the Holy Ghost and the time at which Mass should be celebrated on feast days),

and awaits the fullness of the Holy Spirit in the Eucharistic Sacrifice. In mystery the feast's Mass re-enacts the descent of the Holy Ghost. We gather in spirit at St. Peter's, the church of all nations, even as on the first Pentecost people from every nation assembled around the Cenacle.

Introit: Now the Holy Spirit lives in the hearts of all peoples and makes them understand each other; it was sin that had confused their tongues. Psalm 67 paints the triumphal march of the Church through the ages. The *Oration,* the well-known and frequently used prayer to the Holy Ghost, begs God for right understanding and consolation.

The *Epistle* describes the marvellous phenomena at the first Pentecost; in the Mass these are now repeated with even greater results. Nevertheless, Pentecost's miracle has not by any means transformed us perfectly. As long as we live and as long as the Church remains upon earth the Spirit's fiery tongues must keep descending; this is why the text contains the fervent plea: *Veni*, "Come, Holy Ghost" (*Allel.* and *Seq.*). The invocation, *Veni, Sancte Spiritus*, is not taken from Scripture, yet Holy Church cherishes the verse so highly that she kneels while praying or chanting it. In this "Come, Holy Ghost" there is something of the early Christian *Maranatha.*

The beautiful *Sequence* that follows simply offers an extended meditation on the *Veni, Sancte Spiritus.* In the *Gospel* (containing the last mention of the Holy Spirit in Jesus' farewell discourse) our Savior describes the work of the Holy Ghost. It is the Holy Spirit who makes us temples of the Blessed Trinity (a favorite doctrine of St. Paul and the primitive Church). He is our Teacher and Intercessor; He gives us the gift of peace and infuses into us the spirit of martyrdom. We receive these gifts today, every day in the Eucharistic Sacrifice.

The *Offertory* hymn was well chosen. In bearing our gifts to the altar, we resemble Israel's kings proceeding to the Temple in Jerusalem. So that the grace of Easter may achieve its purpose, we ask for new strength, *confirma* (Pentecost corroborates and completes the Easter mystery). In the Eucharist the Holy Spirit

descends anew, and Pentecost's primary miracle takes place again within our souls (*Comm.*). As on Easter the *Secret* and *Postcommunion* are the same as for the Vigil. By the enlightenment of the Holy Spirit may our Offertory gifts cleanse our hearts (*Secr.*); and may the Eucharistic gifts enliven and render fruitful our efforts through the operation of the Holy Spirit (*Postc.*).

3. The Pentecost Story. With the Acts of the Apostles as our guide, we will now study the story of the Spirit's descent upon the assembled disciples. After Jesus had ascended to heaven from Mt. Olivet, the apostles and disciples returned to the Holy City. They remained together in the Upper Room or Cenacle, the place where Jesus had appeared to them and which may well be called the first Christian church. About a hundred and twenty persons were assembled there. They chose Matthias as an apostle in place of the unhappy Judas; they prayed and waited for the Paraclete.

Ten days had passed, it was Sunday, the seventh Sunday after the resurrection. At about nine o'clock in the morning, as they were together praying fervently, the Holy Ghost descended upon them. Note how all the great theophanies in Christ's life occurred during the course of prayer. After His baptism, for instance, when Jesus was praying the heavens opened and the Holy Ghost descended in the form of a dove; likewise, it was during prayer at night that the transfiguration took place on Tabor. Surely too it was while Mary was praying that Gabriel delivered his message, and the Holy Ghost overshadowed her. Pentecost followed precedent. The small community of Christians had prepared themselves through prayer for the coming of the Paraclete. The same is true at Mass today, every day; through prayer we ready our souls for the advent of the Spirit.

The descent upon the apostles was internal and invisible in nature although accompanied by certain visible phenomena. There came a mighty roar, like the onrush of a violent wind. It came suddenly, from heaven; but unlike storms that strike a structure from without, this one penetrated and filled the room

where the disciples were gathered. Therefore it was not a natural wind, it was a miracle peculiar to the occasion. A second visible sign consisted in tongues of fire that descended upon each one present. These fiery tongues gave visible evidence that the Holy Ghost had descended upon them.

Today at Mass, particularly at holy Communion, the power of the Holy Ghost will come down upon us; fiery tongues will not be seen, but invisible tongues of fire will not be absent. There was still another external manifestation of the Holy Spirit; the apostles and disciples were enabled to speak various languages.

After the roar of the wind many of Jerusalem's pilgrims hurried to the Cenacle. Pentecost was one of the three festivals which obliged all Jews to be present in Jerusalem. Jews from distant lands, and Jewish converts from paganism too, attended these feasts. As a result, a colorful crowd speaking a variety of languages surrounded the house. Now the apostles, who so shortly before had hid in fear behind locked doors, came forth and courageously walked among the multitude speaking to each in his native tongue. It was indeed amazing! Galileans, and multilingual?

But the malicious too were present; they had the answer. Nothing marvellous at all! Those Galileans were simply drunk, and their drunken babble sounded like a foreign language! Peter showed no hesitation in answering the charge. None of their number, he said, were intoxicated; it was but nine o'clock in the morning, and at that hour men usually are sober. What the multitude saw was, in fact, the fulfillment of Joel's prophecy: In those days (of the Messiah), God will pour forth His Spirit upon men and they will prophesy. . . . Then the apostle pointed his words more directly against the accusers: they had killed Jesus, had nailed Him to the Cross; but God had awakened Him and after His departure to heaven, He sent the Holy Ghost.

The pilgrims who had heard Peter give this first pentecostal sermon "were pierced to the heart and said: Brethren, what shall we do? But Peter said to them: Repent and be baptized;

and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit." Three thousand responded.

One final question: why the miracle of tongues? In answer, recall the story regarding the tower of Babel. Puffed up by pride, men attempted to build a tower that would touch the heavens. To punish their sin, God confused their speech. Sin causes confusion and division. Now Christ came to gather all men into His Church and thereby to unite them to Himself. This should result in creating but one family of nations again. To this blessed state the miracle of tongues points.

Yes, even we as individuals have a gift of tongues which all men can understand. It is the gift of love infused into us by the Holy Spirit. Love unites, love is a common language, by means of love we can speak to all nations.

PENTECOST MONDAY

Station at St. Peter in Chains

From baptism to confirmation

The feast continues a second day! Yesterday's celebration concentrated on the central event of Pentecost; the nations of the world assembled at St. Peter's to experience again the miracle of the Spirit's descent. Today, attention is directed to the newly

The Introit of today's Mass is shown pictorially — ears with birds, honey dripping from the Rock.

baptized and confirmed, and that includes all of us who are activating the graces of these sacraments. We should not forget that Pentecost, like Easter, was a time of baptism in ancient times. Today Mother Church calls the neophytes together (we are always to number ourselves among them) and impresses upon them the dignity and importance of their new status.

She assembles them around the apostles, the fathers of our faith. Originally the station was dedicated to all the apostles; but when the chains of Peter were placed there, it received the present name of St. Peter in Chains. It is with the apostles that we gather for the obvious reason that they were the first to receive the graces of Pentecost.

1. **Holy Mass (Cibavit eos).** Pentecost's graces come to us through the Mass. For the holy Sacrifice effects that which is described in the feast's prayer formularies. The *Introit* is addressed to the neophytes. They have entered the "promised land" of the Church, have received the "best of wheat" (the holy Eucharist), and have strengthened themselves with "honey" from the "Rock" — Christ. (A mixture of milk and honey was given to the neophytes after Communion.) Psalm 80, a sermon in which God Himself addresses His people, should be read here in its entirety. It was He who had led Israel out of Egypt and had brought them into the Promised Land. And now it was their duty to obey Him. If they were faithful, He would crush all their enemies, and they would prosper. The sermon's moral is intended for the neophytes *and* for *us*.

The *Oration* is short, meaty, and to the point. After referring to the Spirit's descent upon the apostles (see station), it continues, "Grant peace also to those to whom You have given the gift of faith." By this prayer some light is shed on the liturgical meaning of the word peace. Peace implies an advancement in our Christian status. Faith, imparted through baptism, marks the beginning; peace, or maturity, comes in confirmation. Of the blessed in heaven we read in the liturgy, *Illi autem sunt in pace* — But they are at peace. Perhaps the meaning of peace may best be explained by paraphrasing it thus: grace here below, glory

beyond. The Collect, therefore, asks that those who were given the grace of baptism may also be given the grace of confirmation.

At the *Epistle* Peter stands in our midst, "opens his mouth," and speaks as he once spoke to the first family of Gentile converts, that of the centurion Cornelius. It was an epoch-making event, with the Holy Ghost intervening directly by granting the Gentiles the graces of Pentecost and confirmation even before they were baptized. Thus He personally opened the Church's doors to non-Jews, to the whole, wide pagan world. Surely He will now give us, who already have been baptized, grace unto spiritual strengthening.

The *Gospel* relates the conversation between Christ and Nicodemus. Here again the Church has the neophytes in mind. Their judgment was their election. The work of redemption is seen in the light of the spiritual renewal effected by Pentecost. The redemption is the greatest manifestation of God's love. "God so loved the world that He gave His only-begotten Son." Christ is primarily our Savior, not our Judge. The divine Light has come into the world; we, God's children, love this Light, not the darkness; and because we "do the truth," we "come to the Light." In order to attain the Light perfectly, the Holy Ghost descends upon us.

The *Offertory* combines the Spirit's descent with baptism; thus again, baptism and confirmation. "The Lord thundered from heaven (at the first Pentecost), the Most High gave forth His voice. And fountains of waters streamed up (in baptism), alleluia." With words from the lips of the Lord Himself, the *Communion* assures us that the Holy Ghost will be our Teacher. Not without good reason, then, may we entitle Pentecost's second Mass, "From Baptism to Confirmation." The *Secret* clarifies the implications of our offertory gifts; they symbolize our spiritual oblation, and by them we become an everlasting sacrifice to God. The formulary's final prayer seeks protection from the fury of enemies.

2. Divine Office. St. Augustine's homily is an edifying meditation on the conversation between Nicodemus and Jesus as

recorded in today's Gospel. "Physicians try their very best to heal the sick. And one who does not follow a physician's orders is responsible for his own death. Now a Savior came into this world. But why is He called Savior of the world unless He came to heal, not to judge? You refuse to be healed by Him? You will be judged by your own action. Why do I say: You will be judged? Listen to what He Himself says: He who believes in Him is not judged; but he who does not believe — did you expect Him to continue with: He will be judged? No, He says: He is *already* judged. There is no sign of judgment, and it has already been pronounced.

"They loved the darkness rather than the light. Jesus emphasized this statement. For there were some who loved their sins, while others confessed their sins. Now he who acknowledges his sins and confesses them, is already cooperating with God. God accuses you of sin, and if you too accuse yourself of the same, you are at one with God. Consider the matter from this twofold viewpoint: the man and the sinner. What pertains to you as a man, God made; what pertains to you as a sinner, is due to you. Destroy, then, what you made, in order that God may save what He made. What is due to yourself you must hate, you must love that which is due to God. When you begin to hate what is your own, you start doing good, because you are condemning your own evil works. The beginning of good works, therefore, is the confession of evil works."

3. **The "Veni, Sancte Spiritus."** When speaking to God, the Church generally uses words from Holy Writ; she seems to shy away from expressions of her own. However, when she does employ an original composition, her words are pregnant with meaning. Even as nature's well-formed rock crystals are the result of processes centuries long, so the words of Mother Church are the fruit of many generations that have loved, yearned, prayed, and believed. How true this is of the simple yet profound prayer: "Come, Holy Ghost, fill the hearts of the faithful and enkindle in them the fire of Your love!" Whenever this prayer is said or sung, the Church bids us fall on our knees.

a) *Veni — Come*! The word has a life-story as old as the human race. Before the advent of Christ, it had long been on the lips of the Israelites. A common name for the Messiah was, "He who is to come." When in prison John the Baptist instructed his followers to ask Jesus, "Are You He who is to come, or shall we look for another?" The first Christians borrowed the word to express their longing for the parousia. Angels said of the departed Master: "Men of Galilee, why do you stand looking up to heaven? This Jesus . . . shall *come* in the same way."

In the primitive Church divine services always ended with the yearning cry, "Maranatha," i.e., "Come, Lord." What wonder, then, that the Church has incorporated the word into her liturgy. In the seven "O" antiphons of Advent our longing for the Redeemer is expressed by the word *Veni* — Come, to redeem us. With this background it is easy to see why the same word is used to express our longing for the coming of the Holy Ghost.

But now someone may say: Is not the Holy Ghost already present in us? Why then express longing for Him? Indeed, He is in our midst. And yet He must come to us. Of the Holy Ghost the same is true which John the Baptist once said to the Sanhedrin of Christ: ". . . in the midst of you there has stood One whom you do not know." The Holy Ghost dwells in the Church, in our souls; but we do not know Him, and we hinder His work. Although His power is there, it is bound and ineffective. By the word "Come," I make this plea: Loose Your power, break the bonds with which my human will bound You.

b) *Holy Ghost.* Christ frequently referred to the third Person of the Blessed Trinity as the Paraclete, a name which can mean Advocate or Comforter. On two occasions He used the expression, Holy Ghost. Several other titles are found in the Sequence, e.g., Father of the poor, Bestower of gifts, Light of hearts. Another common designation is "Finger of God's right hand." But usually the name occurs that best indicates His work, viz., the Holy Spirit. The very name is a challenge to be holy or spiritual. For we can be bearers of the Spirit only if we strive for holiness, strive to be men of the spirit rather than of the flesh.

c) *Fill the hearts of the faithful.* The word "fill" rings familiar from the account in Acts, "They were all filled with the Holy Spirit." Our hearts and souls should be vessels into which the Holy Spirit pours in overflowing measure the strong wine of His gifts. We must be empty vessels; for if we are filled with self-love, with pride and egoism, there will be no room for His precious gifts.

d) In what does this strong wine consist? The answer is found in the final clause of the invocation: ***Enkindle in them the fire of Your love.*** Love is the Holy Spirit's gift *par excellence*, holy love of God and neighbor. Christ said of the Holy Spirit, "He will receive of what is Mine." Love, Christ's own commandment, is now ascribed to the Holy Spirit, "Your love." This love is a fire; His appearance on Pentecost, therefore, was in the form of fiery tongues. The Christian community was "baptized in the Holy Spirit and in fire." Fire illumines, warms, destroys and purifies; may the Holy Spirit be fire in us today. May His fire expel darkness and banish cold, may it consume all that is unsavory and sinful to purify our souls. Then we will be pure gold in the crown that is Christ's.

PENTECOST TUESDAY

Station at St. Anastasia

Pentecost and glorification

1. **Holy Mass (Accipite).** The feast continues a third day! The Church is completely under the spell of Pentecost's boundless joy. Only through the descent of the Holy Ghost did she attain full "glory" (Intr.); her children do not merely receive life, but receive it "more abundantly" (Gosp.); and the glory accruing to the Church and her members through the activity

of the Holy Spirit perfects the glorification of Christ (Comm.). Note too that the station is at St. Anastasia, i.e., the *resurrection* church.

The basic themes of today's Mass may then be seen in the following three excerpts: "Receive your glorious good fortune, alleluia; and give thanks to God, alleluia, who has called you to a heavenly kingdom, alleluia, alleluia, alleluia" (*Intr.*). "I came that they may have life, and have it more abundantly" (*Gosp.*). "The Spirit who proceeds from the Father, alleluia; He will glorify Me, alleluia, alleluia" (*Comm.*). These sentiments permeate the entire Mass.

The *Epistle* reports an historical event that shows how the Holy Ghost completes what is begun at baptism. Peter and John are sent to confirm those who were already baptized in Samaria, "They had only been baptized in the Name of the Lord Jesus. Then they laid their hands on them and they received the Holy Spirit." This episode has provided proof for the Catholic doc-

trine on confirmation. The bishop acts as minister, the sacrament effects spiritual maturity and makes the recipient an adult Christian.

And to the query: How does the Holy Ghost effect this spiritual adulthood and its resultant glorification?, the *Oration* gives the answer. "May the power of the Holy Ghost be ever with us, mercifully cleansing our hearts and defending them from all harm." Cleansing, protecting — by these two means the Holy Ghost leads the Church to glory. For the attainment of this end He has two sacraments at His disposal, penance and the Eucharist. Today's Mass points out both. "The Lord opened the doors of heaven and rained down manna upon them that they might eat. The bread of heaven He gave them, men ate the bread of angels, alleluia" (*Off.*). "May the Holy Ghost renew our souls for He is Himself the remission of all sin" (*Postc.*).

Why does a "Good Shepherd" parable occur in the Mass today? During the course of the year there are several "Good Shepherd Masses," e.g., at the beginning of Lent (Monday after the first Sunday of Lent), at Easter (second Sunday after Easter), today, and at the beginning of the season after Pentecost (third Sunday after Pentecost). In the ancient Church no picture occurred more frequently than that of the Good Shepherd; no wonder, then, that Good Shepherd passages are not foreign to the liturgy.

We may note, however, that "Shepherd Masses" are generally found at the beginning of a new season. Is this perhaps a means by which the liturgy endeavors to show us that the Lord would lead us as a Good Shepherd through the various seasons of the ecclesiastical year? How would that apply today? Certainly Jesus continues His role of Good Shepherd by sending us the Holy Ghost. "I am the door of the sheep. . . . If anyone enters by Me, he shall be safe, and shall go in and out, and shall find pastures." But would it be too bold to call the Holy Ghost who is the spirit of Jesus, the Church's Good Shepherd? In His farewell discourse Jesus promised Him to us as our Guide and Comforter and Advocate. Note too how the *Gospel's* climactic con-

clusion: "I came that they may have life, and have it more abundantly," synthesizes the activity of this Good Shepherd.

The *Secret* arouses the proper sentiments to participate properly in the sacrificial banquet, "May the gifts here offered purify us and make us worthy to partake in the true Sacrifice." (The difference between our offerings and Christ's Offering is clearly indicated.)

2. Antiphons. As the sun rises over the eastern horizon, the Church sings: "I am the door, says the Lord. If anyone enters by Me he shall be safe, and shall find pastures, alleluia" (Ben. Ant.). By the time it sets we should be filled with the Spirit's precious gift of peace; therefore the words: "Peace I leave with you, My peace I give to you; not as the world gives do I give to you, alleluia" (Magn. Ant.).

3. The Sequence of Pentecost. Yesterday we reflected upon a very ancient and venerable prayer, the Church's sublime invocation, *Veni, Sancte Spiritus* — Come, Holy Ghost. For centuries this cry has been on the lips of the faithful, uttered by untold thousands. It served as the thurible from which rose the incense of their fervent yearning. No wonder then that countless meditations and aspirations have been occasioned by its lofty sentiments. One such meditation, which has persisted through the centuries, is the Sequence of Pentecost. It is a classical example of the Church's method of meditating. First, however, a few observations on chants between readings in the liturgy.

According to an old liturgical axiom a lesson must never be followed directly by another; something chanted should intervene, perferably from the Psalter. This allows opportunity to meditate briefly upon that which has been read, and permits its message to echo in the soul. Accordingly, from most ancient times, a song has been inserted between the Epistle and Gospel; perhaps even two or three such songs. The first of these usually is the Gradual, which echoes the Epistle; the second is the Alleluia, which heralds or introduces the Gospel. At times we find a chant known as the Tract; and occasionally a Sequence.

These chants vary according to the ecclesiastical season. Be-

cause the Gradual is serious in character, it is omitted during Easter time; the Alleluia is joyous, and therefore is not found during Lent. The Alleluia song actually comprises two alleluias, then a verse, and finally another alleluia; in paschal time a second verse is added, which likewise ends with alleluia. Joyfully this chant proclaims the coming of the Lord Jesus in the Gospel.

At one period in history Christians were so fond of this hymn, especially the alleluia, that they prolonged it indefinitely. The continuation of the alleluia's "ia" became known as the *Sequentia*, or, "and so forth." In the course of time a text in the form of a poem was substituted for the endless "ia"; this text then became known as the *Sequentia*, or Sequence. The innovation proved so appealing to Christians during the Middle Ages that almost every Mass that had an Alleluia also had a Sequence.

Hundreds of Sequences from the Middle Ages are still extant. But when Pope Pius V in 1570 revised the Roman Missal, almost all were omitted. Only the five most beautiful remained, among them that of Pentecost. We have, then, the answer to the question: What is the nature of today's Sequence? It is a meditation on the chant immediately preceding. But the Alleluia chant of Pentecost is the beautiful prayer: "Come, Holy Ghost," which we considered yesterday. Pentecost's Sequence, therefore, is a meditation on the *Veni, Sancte Spiritus*. This deserves closer examination.

It is a magnificent hymn, the *Veni, Sancte Spiritus*. The author is unknown, but it belongs among the finest compositions of the Middle Ages. In content the poem simply paraphrases the words: "Come, Holy Ghost, fill the hearts of Your faithful." The first strophe develops the word "Come"; the second strophe is devoted to "Holy Ghost"; the third begins with "fill"; the fourth indicates what the Holy Ghost should do in "hearts"; and the fifth and final strophe hinges on the word "faithful."

Another type of symmetry is obvious in the construction of the strophes. The first repeats *Veni* (Come) four times, the fifth repeats *da* (give) four times; the second strophe gives six titles to the Holy Ghost, the fourth directs six petitions to Him:

the third or middle strophe is closely allied to the preceding and following, giving a brief summary of their contents. The entire Sequence is a prayer of petition so intimate and beseeching that the divine *afflatus* of the Holy Spirit is soon perceived.

To give a detailed explanation of the Sequence would take us too far afield. Neither is this necessary, since the contents are so simple and the petitions so fervent that no one has difficulty praying it. a) The poem in Latin begins with exactly the same words as the invocation: *Veni, Sancte Spiritus.* The next two lines tell what the Holy Ghost should do upon His arrival, "Send a ray of Your light from heaven." Thereupon a return to theme: "Come, Holy Ghost." "Come" is repeated three times, but each time the Holy Ghost is addressed with a different title. All seem equally beautiful, "Father of the poor . . . Giver of gifts . . . Light of hearts."

b) By these titles a transition to the second stanza, which considers the words "Holy Ghost," has already been made. Jesus referred to the Holy Ghost as the "Paraclete," a word which we may translate by Advocate or Consoler. The poet paraphrases it in five different ways, "The soul's sweet Guest. . . Sweet Refreshment . . . Rest in labor . . . Coolness in heat . . . Comforter of tears." What excellent imagery, what inspiration in a few short lines!

c) The next word of the invocation is "fill' (*reple*). The Holy Ghost, addressed as "the Light most blessed," should fill our innermost hearts; now it is apparent how the final words of the invocation, "enkindle in them the fire of Your love," are incorporated into the Sequence. The next lines are cast in the negative — without this blessed Light there is nothing good in man.

d) Human nothingness is a vacuum inviting the activity of the Holy Ghost in the *hearts* of the faithful. His work is outlined in six verbs: He *washes* the sordid, *waters* the hard and arid, *heals* the wounded, *bends* the rigid, *warms* the cold, *leads* the erring. How is the Spirit accomplishing these functions in your soul?

e) The fifth and final strophe was inspired by the words, *tuorum fidelium*, Your faithful. May the seven gifts of the Holy Ghost come upon them. The concluding lines look forward into eternity; may the Holy Ghost crown His work among us by rewarding our acts of virtue, by granting us a happy death and by giving us the endless joys of heaven.

This, the Sequence of Pentecost. It has given us a deep insight into the quiet, ceaseless, irresistible activity of the "unknown God."

EMBER WEDNESDAY

Station at St. Mary Major

The Holy Ghost in His Church

1. Originally the summer Ember Days served as a time of thanksgiving at the end of the wheat harvest in Mediterranean countries. The present liturgy, however, only faintly suggests or alludes to harvest time (see Lessons on Ember Saturday); rather, wheat and harvest time are used as symbols of supernatural realities. For us wheat is the Eucharistic "Bread of Life" (Gosp.), and the harvest is that of souls reaped by the Holy Ghost. "The floors shall be filled with wheat, and the presses shall be filled with oil and wine (Lesson Ember Friday).

Ember week is a recognized time for spiritual renewal, an occasion to review the past as well as to scan the future. And during these days after Pentecost we can sense more easily the original import and the spirit of joyous gratitude proper to Ember week. Gratitude, not penance, should be the dominant Ember spirit. Even fasting can be an act of thanksgiving! Let us stress positive rather than negative values in our Christian life, cultivate the consciousness of being God's holy children rather than feel ourselves as outcasts and sinners.

Wednesday of Ember week is dedicated to Mary, it is a day of interior recollection. Friday is devoted to penance, while Saturday lays greatest stress on thanksgiving. Make a summary review today of the past quarter year. These three months, covering the Lenten and paschal seasons, were certainly the most important segment of the Church's year of grace. What tremendous graces we received! But how did we use them? Are they producing fruit? Will there be a spiritual harvest? "I will delight in Your commandments, which I love." This Offertory chant occurs on three Ember Wednesdays, and serves to remind us to devote the day to recollection.

2. **Holy Mass (Deus dum)** today presents an inspiring train of thought. The *Introit* gives the theme: the Church's journey through the ages, led by the Holy Ghost. "O God (the Holy Ghost), when You went forth in the sight of the people, making a passage for them and dwelling in their midst, alleluia; the earth quaked, the heavens fell, alleluia, alleluia." A more striking picture of the Holy Ghost's activity could hardly be imagined!

Details are given in the three Readings, with commentary supplied by the Orations. The first is taken from Peter's sermon on Pentecost. In words from the prophet Joel he describes the Holy Ghost's activity in the Church. "And it shall come to pass in the last days, says the Lord, that I will pour forth of My Spirit upon all flesh; and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, and your young men shall see visions, and your old men shall dream dreams."

How is this prophecy fulfilled? The Holy Ghost operates both externally and internally, through miracles and through graces. The *Epistle* relates some of the external operations, the miracles performed by the apostles in the early Church at Jerusalem: ". . . they carried the sick into the streets and laid them on beds and pallets that, when Peter passed, his shadow at least might fall on some of them. And there came also multitudes from the towns near Jerusalem, bringing the sick and those troubled with unclean spirits, and they were all cured."

Such is the external activity of the Holy Ghost. And though this activity diminished with the ever expanding organization of the Church, it has never disappeared entirely. Miracles will always take place to prove that the Holy Ghost guides the Church in a visible manner; but this particular type of activity is not the most important. Of far greater significance is His internal, invisible activity in the sacraments and the other means of grace that are related to the Eucharist.

It is against this background that we understand the *Gospel.* Christ was speaking of the internal work of the Holy Ghost when He said, "No one can come to Me unless the Father who sent Me draw him . . . it is written in the Prophets: And they all shall be taught of God." It is in the holy Eucharist that the Spirit operates in a very special manner, "If anyone eats of this Bread he shall live forever; and the Bread that I will give is My flesh for the life of the world." (This passage also receives prominence in the Office.)

By means of the Eucharist the Holy Ghost operates in the soul, preserving and developing its spiritual life. This sacrament is the loom upon which He weaves the Church's wedding garment, and the individual soul's wedding garment. And when these are completed, His mission on earth will also be completed.

In the wilderness God rained down manna for Israel — a type of the Eucharist (Gospel). The pillar and cloud of fire recall Israel's journey through the desert (Introit). To the right is the ark of the covenant with the vessel of manna, Aaron's rod, and tablets of the Law; to the left the New Testament fulfillment in the Eucharist.

Then the Church and the soul will enter the heavenly wedding hall for the eternal nuptials. There we will enjoy that everlasting peace which the Holy Ghost is presently infusing into our hearts, and which is already now perceptible in the sacrificial banquet: "Peace I leave with you, alleluia; My peace I give to you, alleluia, alleluia" (*Comm.*).

The two *Collects* may be numbered among the finest of the prayers directed to the Holy Ghost. "May the Comforter, who proceeds from You, O Lord, enlighten our minds; and even as Your Son has promised, may He teach us all truth." "Grant, we beseech You, almighty God, that the Holy Ghost may come, and by dwelling within us, make us His glorious temple." The *Secret* is more directly concerned with the Sacrifice of Christ; in the mystery God is present with His grace, but the efficacy of His grace depends upon our cooperation. The *Postcommunion* is somewhat similar in content; it begs, however, for everlasting happiness.

3. **Divine Office.** St. Augustine takes the Gospel text, "No one can come to Me unless the Father who sent Me draw him," as the topic for the day's spiritual discussion. "Do not think that you will be drawn against your will; you may, however, be drawn by love. If the poet could say: Everyone is drawn by his own pleasure (Virg. Ec. 2) — and this implies joy, not necessity; delight, not obligation — with much greater assurance can we say that a man is drawn to Christ if his joy is truth, if his joy is blessedness, if his joy is righteousness and life everlasting!

"Or should one think that the senses of the body have their pleasures, while the mind has no joy of its own? Give me one who loves, and he will understand what I say. Give me a person who longs, give me one who hungers, give me one who is wandering in this desert and thirsting after the fountains of his eternal home; give me such a person, and he will understand what I am saying. But a cold, heartless man will never grasp my message.

"Put a green branch before a sheep, and you will draw it. Show some nuts to a boy, and you will entice him. Surely he is drawn

by that which he runs after; love draws him, nothing physical constrains him, he simply is drawn by his own heartstrings. If then certain earthly things that appeal to us as delightful and pleasurable have the power to entice us according to the saying: Everyone is drawn by his own pleasure — should not Christ, whom the Father has revealed, likewise draw us?"

4. Do we receive anything particular on the feast of Pentecost? What, if any, is its special significance? Every feast of the Church brings with it two blessings, a revelation and a grace. These are the two treasures Christ brought to earth, and which the Church has preserved for us. Every feast gives us a certain segment of revealed truth, every feast confers its appropriate grace, providing we are of good will.

a) Now what truth is proper to Pentecost? Pentecost brings Easter to completion. Easter proclaimed the redemption. Christ, the Victor over death and hell, liberated men from the bonds of sin and opened the kingdom of God. Pentecost heralds the glad tidings that the redemptive work of Christ continues in the Church; it announces to us the presence and activity of the Holy Ghost. The work begun by Christ is continued in the Church by the Holy Ghost. Let us strengthen our faith in the Holy Ghost, the "Giver of Life." What the soul is to the body, the Holy Ghost is to the Church and to souls. It is the Holy Ghost who transforms the Church, composed as it is of weak and sinful men, into Christ's mystical Body, into a communion of saints, into a reservoir of grace, into Christ continuing His work of teaching and redeeming.

b) And Pentecost's special grace? As Easter renews baptism, Pentecost should *confirm* us again. Baptism makes us children of God, confirmation should make us mature, experienced Christians. The grace of Pentecost should give us strength to profess our faith privately as well as publicly. Pentecost's grace should dispose us to exercise our common priesthood around the altar and in our homes, it should make us temples of the Holy Ghost. Pentecost's grace should increase within us the Spirit's seven gifts — wisdom, understanding, counsel, fortitude, knowledge,

piety, and fear of the Lord. Pray fervently for Pentecost's graces "Come, Holy Ghost, fill the hearts of Your faithful."

PENTECOST THURSDAY

Station at St. Lawrence

The Holy Ghost and the sacrament of Orders

In ancient times all Thursdays were aliturgical. Nor did Pentecost have an octave, because in itself it is the octave of Easter. The feast was celebrated for three days; accordingly, when Ember Days were assigned to the week, only Thursday was lacking to complete the octave. This was remedied by repeating Sunday's Mass, substituting the readings with excerpts having special reference to the station church.

1. **Holy Mass (Spiritus Domini).** That which is peculiar to the day's liturgy is found in the station and in the two Readings. The neophytes and the newly confirmed are brought before the patron of catechumens, Lawrence the deacon. For this reason both the Epistle and the Gospel tell of the work of Christ's disciples. The *Epistle* describes the pastoral labors of the deacon Philip in Samaria, his preaching and his miracles. "For unclean spirits, crying with a loud voice, went out of many possessed persons, and many paralytics and cripples were cured." (The deacon Philip is here substituted for the deacon Lawrence.)

In the *Gospel* Jesus instructs the twelve apostles on how to missionize. Perhaps one would have expected the passage in which Jesus sends out the seventy-two disciples, since this account

bears easier comparison with the work of deacons. It may be the opening sentence of the Gospel that links it to the Epistle and the ministry of deacons, "Jesus gave them power and authority over all the devils." The Holy Ghost too stands opposed to evil spirits and seeks to expel them through His co-workers, deacons and priests. (Exorcism was formerly an important function of those in Holy Orders.)

Would it be wrong to hold that today's liturgy directs attention to the Holy Spirit's role in the sacrament of Orders? If Christians receive lay priesthood through the sacrament of confirmation, then that of Orders certainly lies in the ambit of the Holy Spirit's activity. On the night of His resurrection, when Jesus gave to the apostles the power of forgiving sins, He breathed on them and said: "Receive the Holy Spirit," i.e., receive the power that the Holy Spirit grants through sacred ordination. For this reason the rite of ordination to the diaconate, priesthood and episcopate (the three highest in the series) places special emphasis on the work of the Holy Ghost; it is quite different in the case of minor orders and the subdiaconate. It is therefore quite in keeping with the spirit of the present Ember week to implore the Holy Ghost to keep holy His special representatives so that they may fulfill their great obligation of exorcising "unclean spirits" from the souls of men and of planting there the grace of God.

Today's liturgy also reminds us of the priesthood common to all Christians that the Holy Spirit exercises within us. On our part this lay priesthood implies grave duties and important rights. We exercise our lay priesthood through active participation with the priest at Mass; in the administration of the sacrament of matrimony, and to some extent at baptism; by living the liturgical year; by praying the Divine Office with the Church. The spiritual duties attached to the work of sponsors and parents, the activities proper to Catholic Action and the apostolate must also be seen as manifestations of the priesthood. Pentecost week is the ideal time to reflect seriously upon these lofty duties. The other parts of the Mass are the same as on Pentecost.

2. **Divine Office.** After explaining the Gospel, St. Ambrose

closes with a unique allegorical interpretation. "This passage also contains a message more deeply steeped in mystery. For when someone chooses a house, he likewise inquires about the host. Now the house that we choose is the Church, and its master is Christ. Is there any house more suitable for the Gospel's message than the Church? And is anyone more worthy of our choice as host than Christ?

"He washes the feet of His guests. He permits none of those whom He has received into His house to remain uncleansed. He purifies them of all previous defilement, and preserves them pure for the future. Therefore He is the only Host whom you need never leave, His are the only quarters you must never change. To Him we gladly say: Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of everlasting life, and we have come to believe."

To these reflections it would be appropriate to add one of the beautiful responsories.

A divine fire came, one that did not burn but illumined; one that did not consume but enlightened. It found the hearts of the disciples clean vessels.
And gave them charismatic gifts, alleluia, alleluia.
It found them united by charity, and conferred upon them God's graces in abundance.

3. The Seven Gifts of the Holy Ghost. The graces and helps given by God to enable one to live a genuine Christian life are frequently referred to as the seven gifts of the Holy Ghost. In the rite of confirmation the bishop, with hands extended over those to be confirmed, prays as follows: "Almighty and eternal God . . . send forth from heaven Your sevenfold Holy Spirit, the Comforter: the Spirit of wisdom and understanding, the Spirit of counsel and fortitude, the Spirit of knowledge and piety; and fill them with the Spirit of Your fear." To which the confirmandi four times respond, "Amen." This is the most solemn and likewise the most significant mention of the seven gifts of the Holy Ghost in the entire liturgy. From it we learn that the

sacrament of confirmation conferred upon us the same seven gifts of the Holy Ghost.

If we search the Scriptures, we will find this pertinent passage in the prophet Isaias: "And there shall come forth a Rod from the root of Jesse, and a Flower shall rise up from his root. And the Spirit of the Lord shall rest upon Him: the Spirit of wisdom and understanding, the Spirit of counsel and of fortitude, the Spirit of knowledge and of godliness, and He shall be filled with the Spirit of the fear of the Lord" (11:1–3). This is the earliest text mentioning the seven gifts of the Holy Ghost. Now what did the prophet wish to say? He was speaking of the Messiah who would be born in David's family. Upon Him the Spirit of God would rest, and this Spirit would be a Spirit of wisdom, of understanding, of counsel, of fortitude, etc.

Now the Gospel actually does tell us that at the baptism of Jesus the Holy Ghost "descended as a dove and came upon Him." It was our Savior then who first received the sevenfold gifts of the Holy Ghost. This is a very important point. For if God sends us the seven gifts of the Holy Ghost in the sacrament of confirmation (and now at Pentecost), it implies a similarity between ourselves and Christ, it implies that we should become other Christs. And to discover how the seven gifts should influence us, we need only study the life of Jesus, for upon Him rested the Holy Ghost together with His sevenfold gifts.

It would not be difficult to prove by examples from our Lord's life that He possessed each gift of the Holy Ghost in the fullest possible manner. That however would lead us too far afield. Moreover, a comparison of the various gifts fails to show a sharp distinction among them. They can be readily classified under three headings. The first consists of wisdom, understanding, and counsel, with knowledge included under wisdom. Fortitude, or moral strength, comprises the second heading. Piety and fear of the Lord constitute the third.

Upon examining this arrangement more closely, we find that it corresponds to three basic human faculties. The first is proper to the intellect, the second to the will, and the third to the heart.

The four gifts which refer to the intellect impart true wisdom in the practical affairs of life. It is the wisdom praised in the Sapiential Books of the Old Testament, a wisdom that is identical with morality and virtue, a wisdom that aligns one with the will of God in all the actions of life.

Fortitude confers the moral courage needed to struggle against the cravings of lower nature, to overcome obstacles, to suffer in patience, to be a martyr. By the sin of our first parents the human intellect was darkened and the will weakened; this condition the Holy Ghost seeks to remedy by aiding us with His gifts. The two last gifts in the series serve to bind us most intimately to God, to make Him the focal point of all our activity. The purpose, then, of the Spirit's seven gifts is to make us perfect Christians.

In conclusion it might be added that the seven gifts have some relation to Christ's threefold office of king, priest, and prophet. But this dignity is shared by all the members of His mystical Body, as indicated in the consecration prayer of holy chrism: "We beseech You . . . . to sanctify with Your blessing this precious creature (the chrism) and to infuse into the might of the Holy Spirit, by the cooperation of the power of Christ Your Son, from whom chrism itself receives its name — for with it You have anointed priests, kings, prophets and martyrs." A king needs wisdom, counsel, fortitude; a priest, piety; a prophet must have every gift, for he is the agent through whom God works among men.

EMBER FRIDAY

Station at the Twelve Apostles

I will not leave you orphans

Today the liturgy presents two themes with corresponding moods that to us seem quite conflicting, viz., Ember week penance and Pentecost joy. Assuredly the mentality of the early Church differed vastly from ours. While Christians of an earlier age had a most vivid realization of redemption, we have attached greater importance to consciousness of sin. This attitude is the result of the modern humanistic approach to piety. It would benefit us greatly to promote the spirit of the ancient Church, a spirit that exults and rejoices over our liberation from sin and evil. As a model we could take the paralytic in today's Gospel: "He went away to his house, glorifying God." The Mass formulary is an excellent source for the ancient or, we might say, the true Christian spirit.

a) On Ember Friday the Mass liturgy is always somewhat peni-

Pictured is the spiritual harvest wrought by the Holy Ghost. Just as rain is needed to produce a good harvest, so the Spirit's fire renders Church and soul fruitful. Eucharistic wheat and wine abound on all sides; with it God's children refresh themselves unto eternal life, as indicated by the peacocks at the huge stone jar (after a drawing in St. Mark's cathedral, Venice). Above, the Holy Spirit strikes a harp to make the joy of Pentecost resound throughout the Church.

tential in character. In spirit we are present in the Church of the Twelve Apostles, a church that the ancients associated with penance. Penance, too, is prominent in the Gospel story. For we will resemble the man with palsy if we regret the "sins, offences, and negligences" that we fell victim to during the past quarter year in spite of the innumerable graces and gifts received from God. And Christian confidence will prompt us to imitate the stretcher bearers who did the unusual to reach Jesus. Now, in the Mass, we receive absolution from the Lord Himself, "Your sins are forgiven." Keep Ember Friday, therefore, as a day of penance.

In Matins St. Ambrose gives us some edifying thoughts in connection with the Gospel. "Every sick man needs attendants who are concerned about his recovery. We too stand in need of attendants through whom our spiritual illnesses and limping virtues may be healed with the aid of divine instruction. We need stretcher bearers such as the sick man in the Gospel had, persons who would lift our soul to heaven even though it is stricken by physical torpor. By their aid the soul will readily mount upward, place itself at the feet of Jesus, and become worthy of divine recognition.

"For the Lord looks with pleasure upon those who humble themselves, even as He regarded the lowliness of His handmaid. If you are given to judging others, learn to forgive; if you are ill, learn to beg help. If you doubt that your grave sins will be forgiven, ask the Church to be your advocate. She will plead your case, and at her bequest the Lord will grant what He might have denied you. While the Gospel narrative relates the physical cure granted to the man suffering from palsy, our thoughts dwell on the spiritual restoration wrought for the man whose sins were forgiven."

It will, of course, be entirely in keeping with the spirit of the Church, if we see a connection between penance and Pentecost. There is an indication of this in last Tuesday's Postcommunion where the Holy Ghost is called "the remission of all sins." Certainly much of the Spirit's work consists in overcoming the lusts of the world, banishing the spirit of sin, and expelling the evil

one from souls where He should dwell. "Grant that Your Church, united in the Holy Ghost, may not be shaken by any hostile attack" (Coll.).

b) The firm conviction of having been redeemed and of having all our sins forgiven by Christ's redeeming sacrifice rings joyously through the entire Mass. Rarely is an *Introit* cast so completely in the Alleluia mood as today's. As is sometimes the case during the second half of the Easter season, the text is subordinate to the Alleluia. "Loudly shall my mouth proclaim: Alleluia; that I may sing: Alleluia. My lips shall rejoice while I sing to You: Alleluia, alleluia!" If you pray all of Ps. 70, you will meet certain verses that refer to penance, e.g., "Cast me not off in my old age; when my strength fails, do not forsake me. . . . Though You have made me feel many bitter afflictions, You will again revive me; from the depths of the earth You will once more raise me."

The reason for our joy is the Holy Ghost, who has been given to us: "O children of Sion, rejoice and be joyful in the Lord your God; for He will give you a Teacher of justice. And He will make the early and the latter rain come down upon you as in the beginning; and the threshing-floors shall be filled with wheat, and the presses shall overflow with wine and oil . . . and you shall know that I am in the midst of Israel" (*Epist.*). This Teacher of justice, this Rain that produces a rich harvest of souls is the Holy Ghost. He dwells in our hearts.

"How good, how sweet is Your Spirit within us, Lord!" (*Allel.*). Now we truly understand what Jesus is saying in the *Communion*, and how He has actually accomplished it, "I will not leave you orphans; I will come to you again, and your heart shall rejoice." We may summarize the message of today's inspiring Mass liturgy in the words: the Holy Ghost is the *Father of all the poor*. So unusual a *Secret* as today's must not be overlooked: "Grant, Lord, that the Sacrifice we offer in Your sight may be consumed by the same divine fire with which the Holy Spirit inflamed the hearts of the disciples of Christ Your Son."

EMBER SATURDAY

Station at St. Peter

The charity of God is poured forth in our hearts by the Holy Spirit

Ember week's thanksgiving day! It is the night between Saturday and Sunday as in the spirit of the ancient Church we gather at St. Peter's, the station for all Christendom. For the Offertory we bring our tithe from the past quarter year (in certain communities and parishes wheat for the altar bread is presented) and joyously voice our gratitude over the spiritual harvest marking the close of Easter time.

1. The Feast's Finale. "The charity of God is poured forth in our hearts, alleluia, by His Spirit who dwells within us, alleluia, alleluia." These inspiring words from St. Paul are, one may say, the *Ite, missa est* to Pentecost's octave (Intr., Epist., Ben. Ant.). They summarize all that the Church teaches concerning the Holy Spirit. The charity of God is divine sonship, is sanctifying grace, is spiritual transfiguration, is participation in Christ's glorified life. The charity of God is the quintessence of our holy religion. To become ever more deeply rooted in the love of God is our life's main task, and to enable us to attain this end is the liturgy's *raison d'etre.*

"Poured out" (*diffusa, infunde, effundam* in today's Mass) is a favored word when the subject is the Holy Ghost. The Holy Ghost not only gives the grace of sonship, He comes personally with His gifts, and dwells within us. During the days ahead this assurance will be our greatest consolation and strength. We are temples of the Spirit of Christ! Week in, week out it will be a mutual task for the Holy Ghost and ourselves to adorn this temple more perfectly. Deeply grateful we say farewell to the Easter season — many indeed were the blessings we received.

The three lessons visualized in the drawing are: a) that God's love "is poured out" (therefore the tongues of fire which fill the temple of the Church — and the soul); b) that the harvest should make us grateful (Eucharist); c) that the cure in Peter's house (i.e., the Church) is taking place on a supernatural plane today.

It is not without sorrow and regret, for ahead of us lies the rough workaday world, the wearisome stamping ground of life.

2. Ember Mass (Caritas Dei). As we chant the *Introit*, it seems that we are already filled with the Holy Spirit; that dwelling within us, He pours forth the love of God in our souls. At the present time an Introit psalm is used that expresses our gratitude over the graces of Pentecost (Ps. 102); formerly, however, it was Pss. 94 or 87, because these psalms were more appropriate to the night vigil.

The first two *Orations* focus on the Holy Ghost, the following three on fasting. Thus the liturgy proposes two important objectives for the day, the Holy Ghost and fasting. "Into our souls pour forth the Holy Spirit; by His wisdom we were created and by His providence we are guided." "May the Holy Spirit kindle

in us that fire which our Lord Jesus Christ cast upon the earth, desiring that it flame up mightily." Treasure these lovely prayers and repeat them occasionally during the coming months.

The first Lesson is Joel's familiar Pentecost prophecy; it was quoted by Peter in his first sermon at Jerusalem (see Ember Wednesday). The three following Lessons are excerpts from the Mosaic Law regarding the feast of Pentecost. The liturgy's message is quickly seen; the Pentecost Ember days were meant as thanksgiving days for the harvest, they are the Christian fulfillment of the Old Testament type. We too should "bring the first-fruits of the harvest to the priest" on the "next day after Sabbath . . . and call this day most solemn and most holy" (2nd Lesson).

The two principal reasons why today's liturgy stresses gratitude are: 1) it is harvest time; 2) the Lord has also led us out of Egypt (at Easter) into a land flowing with milk and honey (the kingdom of God). We offer the first fruits of the land and "feast in all the good things the Lord has given us" (the Eucharist; 3rd Lesson).

God's promises to Israel were destined to be fulfilled perfectly only in the Church. If we are God's obedient children, then prosperity, wine and bread will be ours in abundance (the Eucharist); we will enjoy peace and overcome our enemies. "I will set my tabernacle in the midst of you. . . . I will walk among you and be your God, and you will be My people" (4th Lesson).

Toward morning the story of the three youths in the fiery furnace was read (5th Lesson). From former Ember Saturdays we know the meaning of this Lesson, one of the oldest and most popular. It brings to our minds thoughts of resurrection, of martyrdom. The liturgy might also be thinking of the fire of the Holy Spirit, since today's Mass makes frequent mention of this fire. There is a reason why we kneel down so shortly before this Lesson and sing the beautiful Pentecost prayer: "Come, Holy Ghost, fill the hearts of the faithful and enkindle in them the *fire* of Your love."

With the fifth Lesson the ancient vigil service terminates. It

is at this point that the Mass, strictly speaking, begins. Therefore, the *Gloria in excelsis*. The *Epistle* makes a final survey of the Easter season, and gives a glimpse of the coming days of strife and martyrdom. Last Monday the Collect analyzed Easter and Pentecost, baptism and confirmation, as the progression "from faith to peace." St. Paul makes the same evaluation in today's Epistle: "Having been justified therefore by faith, let us have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ." The Introit text on the charity of God brings this magnificent Epistle to a close. May the passage echo and re-echo in our hearts.

The *Gospel* describes in mystery the action of the Mass. "Jesus . . . went into Simon's house (station at St. Peter); and when the sun was down (the vigil Mass), all who had persons sick with various diseases brought them to Him (i.e., we who come to Mass); He laid His hands upon each of them (imposition of hands — the traditional sign of conferring the Holy Spirit) and healed them . . . Now when it was day, He departed (after Mass He departs from us as the Easter season ends)." It is in the Sacrifice proper that the mystery is fulfilled in its inner reality. Here the children of God "feel the Spirit breathing" upon them (*Comm.*) In ancient Graduals a more appropriate chant is found; as our Master takes leave at the end of the Easter season, He calls out to us, "I will not leave you orphans: I will come again (repeatedly in the Eucharistic sacrifice), and your heart shall rejoice."

he who once conquered death for us,
always triumphs in us

The Proper of the Saints

The Proper of The Saints

April 17

ST. ANICETUS, Pope and Martyr

Obey the Pope, even in minor matters

Today we keep the feast of a martyr-pope in paschal time.

1. **Pope Anicetus,** St. Peter's tenth successor (154-165), ruled at a time when many noteworthy events transpired in the Church of God. It was the golden age of Gnosticism, and its chief proponents, Valentine and Marcion, had come to Rome. From the Orient Polycarp arrived to discuss the question regarding the day for celebrating Easter. Among other illustrious men in Rome at the time were Justin Martyr (cf. April 14), who took the occasion to write his second apology and thus precipitated his martyrdom; and the renowned Jewish Christian scholar, Hegesippus. During the pontificate of Pope Anicetus the Church suffered persecution under the Emperor Marcus Aurelius. There is extant a decree in which Anicetus forbade his clergy the vain and frivolous grooming of their hair. His grave is near that of St. Peter in the Vatican.

Application. Vanity in dress and worldly attire is unbecoming for the faithful too while engaged in divine worship. For they are standing in God's presence, they are in the company of the Blessed Virgin, of the angels, and of their patron saints — yes, the blessed in heaven take part in the sacred drama. It is not surprising, then, that members of liturgically-minded congregations show a different attitude in the matter of dress and personal adornment than that common elsewhere.

2. **Holy Mass (Si diligis me).** For comment on this formulary, see Common of Sovereign Pontiffs, p. 318.

April 21

ST. ANSELM, Bishop and Confessor

Self-reform first!

St. Anselm. *Day of death*: April 21, 1109. *Grave*: in the cathedral of Canterbury. *Life.* As prior and abbot, Anselm made the Benedictine monastery of Bec the center of a true reformation in Normandy and England. From this monastery he exercised a restraining influence on popes, kings, the worldly great, and entire religious orders. Raised to the dignity of Archbishop of Canterbury and primate of England, he waged an heroic campaign in defense of the rights and liberties of the Church. As a result he was deprived of goods and position and finally banned from the country. He journeyed to Rome, and at the Council of Bari supported Pope Urban II against the errors of the Greeks. His writings bear eloquent testimony to his moral stature and learning, and have earned for him the title of "Father of Scholasticism."

Application. St. Anselm was one of the Church's true reformers. Genuine reform begins at home. Anselm first enrolled himself in the school of strict self-abnegation, and then only was he ready and able to reform others. The Mass, *In medio*, is from the Common of a Doctor.

April 22

STS. SOTER AND CAIUS, Popes and Martyrs

I am the true Vine, you are the branches

1. **St. Soter,** the successor to Pope Anicetus, died a martyr's death in 175. He was noted for his kindness to certain Greeks

who had been condemned to the mines because of their faith in Christ. When he ascended the chair of Peter he forbade consecrated virgins to touch the sacred vessels and palls, or to carry censers in church. He also obliged the faithful, except those in mortal sin, to receive holy Communion on Maundy Thursday. Soter is the author of a letter to the Corinthians.

2. **St. Caius** (pope from 283 to 296) was closely related to the Emperor Diocletian. So that he might live to serve the faithful, he remained in concealment a long time and would not leave Rome. Ordinarily it was in the catacombs that he hid, and there he celebrated the holy mysteries and instructed many pagans. It was Pope Caius who decreed (according to the false Decretals) that the following steps must precede consecration to the episcopate: porter, lector, exorcist, acolyte, subdeacon, deacon, and priest. He died a natural death and was buried in the catacomb of Callistus on April 22. St. Susanna was his niece. Pope Urban VIII revived his memory in Rome by restoring his church, naming him as its patron saint, raising it to the rank of a station, and enriching it with the saint's relics.

3. **Holy Mass (Si diligis me).** For explanation, see p. 318.

4. **Divine Office.** The Breviary contains an inspiring lesson on the veneration of martyrs during Easter time. "It is fitting and proper that after the paschal joy we have experienced in the Church, we should share our happiness with the holy martyrs and proclaim to them, sharers in Christ's passion, the glory of His resurrection. For they indeed were partners with the Lord in His humiliation, and should therefore be partners in His joy. This truth we have from St. Paul, "If we suffer with Him, we shall also be glorified with Him; if we endure (with Him), we shall also reign with Him." Those, therefore, who were tortured for Christ's sake, must be glorified with Christ.

"So let us, I say, proclaim the Savior's Easter victory to the the holy martyrs. For just as the sealed tomb of the Lord opened itself, so too their tombs will be opened. Just as the dead members of Christ's physical body regained new life, so too the martyr's cold bodies will be warmed by the glow of immortality;

and as Jesus was awakened, the martyrs will be roused from sleep. They walked the way of the Cross with Him, and consequently they must follow Him on the way of life" (St. Ambrose).

April 23

ST. GEORGE, Martyr

Be a knight of St. George and slay the dragon

1. George, a gallant knight in shining armor on a charging horse! George in the act of slaying the dragon! Here is a saint whose biography is rich in myth and legend. The historical facts are the following.

George was a Cappadocian soldier of high rank. Together with a number of fellow Christians, he suffered a martyr's death about the year 303 during the persecution of Diocletian in Palestine, probably at Diospolis. The Oriental Church refers to him simply as the Great Martyr; his cult dates back to early times, even in the West. Christian knighthood honored him as a most faithful patron. Already in the first centuries the Roman Church dedicated a station church to his honor under the title of "St. George in Velabro" (see Thursday after Ash Wednesday); there the head of the martyr is venerated. No account of his life is found in the Roman Breviary because Pope Gelasius in 496 forbade the reading of the current apocryphal "Acts of St. George." The Martyrology says of him: "The (heavenly) birthday of the holy martyr George, whose glorious martyrdom the Church of God honors among her martyrs' victorious garlands."

2. Holy Mass (Protexisti). The Mass is from the Common of a Martyr in paschal time, with an Epistle from another Common. In this Epistle St. George tells of his zeal for the Gospel of the risen Lord, it was the reason why he suffered "even to bonds"

(a genuine Easter Epistle!). He also tells us that he suffered martyrdom for our sake, so that we might attain "the salvation that is in Christ Jesus." This statement throws new light on our veneration of saints! The saints suffer for our benefit! Our martyr concludes with a challenge, "All who want to live piously in Christ Jesus will suffer persecution."

The *Gospel* gives the allegory of the Vine and the branches. But for what reason? It may be simply a historical coincidence. In ancient times, the last part of St. John's Gospel was used as the *lectio continua* in paschal time. Today's Mass formulary undoubtedly dates to that period (see the Gospels for the Sundays after Easter and the feast of Sts. Philip and James).

A sensitive soul, however, will detect certain delicate relationships between martyrdom and this figure of the Vine. Christ, the King of martyrs, is the Vine that entwined Itself around a Cross; the martyrs are the ripe grapes hanging thereon. The Eucharistic wine, flowing from the wine-press of our Savior's passion, becomes the martyr's inebriating drink. In ancient Christian thinking the three concepts, Cross, Eucharist, martyrdom were so intimately related that one explained the other. In the Canon of the Mass, for instance, there are two lists of martyrs. Our Gospel provides pictorial explanation. Christ, the divine Vine clinging to the Cross, is likewise the Tree of Life in the new paradise. The martyrs are the grapes hanging from the Vine; they have proven the Gospel true, for by remaining attached to Christ they have "brought forth much fruit," even the fruit of martyrdom.

We too are branches on the Vine, Christ. Now at Mass the life-giving sap of the Eucharist flows from the stem into the branches, so that we may "bring forth much fruit." The Vine unites us to the martyrs. And it is precisely in the Mass that this union is operative, for the Communion of Saints is a communion both of suffering and of consolation. See how liturgy and patristics have made us understand the Gospel allegory.

Cardinal Schuster points out that the Greek word for vinedresser is *georgos* (γεωργος). In the Byzantine period, when the

Lessons were read in both languages at Rome, the name George would have been detected in the Gospel.

God's great kingdom in heaven and on earth again praise, "confess" and marvel at the wondrous work of the divine Vine (*Off.*). In the *Communion* we see our saint rejoicing at the heavenly banquet, while we, partaking of the Eucharistic banquet, share his joy on earth. (Ps. 63 begins and concludes the Mass.) Most chants again refer to the saint in the singular.

3. St. Cyprian on Martyrdom. Matins contains a magnificent excerpt from a letter by the holy martyr Cyprian on martyrdom. "With what hymns of praise shall I sing your glory, O bravest martyrs? What encomiums will do justice to your courageous hearts and steadfast faith? You have borne the severest torments even to their glorious end. It was not you who ran from torture; rather, torture withdrew from you. It was not torment that brought your suffering to an end; rather, the crown of victory. It was not to weaken your steadfast faith that you suffered so grievously and so long, but rather that as men of God you would be sent more quickly back to God.

"Amazed, the multitudes gazed upon that heavenly combat, that divine battle, that spiritual struggle, that fight for Christ. They saw God's servants standing there with voice unshaken, with spirit undaunted, strong with the strength of God. None of this world's weapons were theirs, well-armed were they with burning faith. Braver than the torturers were the tortured. Their bodies, bruised and mangled, triumphed over the cruel irons that crushed and tore them. Bloody and oft-repeated stripes failed to vanquish their invincible faith even when, with intestines exposed, they suffered as much from wounds already inflicted as from those being newly added. Blood ran, and it extinguished the fire of persecution. It was glorious gore, and it stilled the flames and fire of hell.

"What a magnificent drama in the eyes of the Lord! How noble! How sublime! What a pleasing spectacle of loyalty and devotion on the part of His soldiers! For thus it is written in the psalms (in which the Holy Ghost speaks to and warns us

likewise): Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of His saints. Precious indeed is the death that purchases immortality at the price of its own blood, that receives its crown for perfecting virtue.

"How Christ rejoiced, how willingly He fought in such servants! For Christ aided them in their struggle; these heroes, confessors of His holy Name, He inspired with courage and endowed with strength. For He who once conquered death for us, always triumphs in us."

April 24

ST. FIDELIS OF SIGMARINGEN, Martyr

Be a "Fidelis" — faithful unto death

Of the martyrs the Church sings:

His elect are gleaming white, alleluia;
Upon them shines God's glory, alleluia.
They are white as milk, alleluia, alleluia.
They are purer than snow, whiter than milk;
they are more shimmering than old ivory,
more beautiful than sapphire (Resp.).

1. **St. Fidelis.** *Day of death*: April 24, 1622. *Grave*: Coire, Switzerland; the saint's head is preserved in Feldkirch (Forralberg). *Picture*: as a Capuchin with a pointed cudgel, the instrument of his martyrdom. *Life*. Fidelis has been called the "protomartyr of the Capuchin Order and of the Propaganda in Rome." He was born in 1577, became a renowned lawyer. But feeling that this profession endangered the salvation of his soul, he decided to join the Capuchin Order and employ his extraordinary gift of eloquence in urging the faithful to lead holy lives and in bringing heretics back to the true faith. An ardent admirer of the founder of his Order, he was a great friend of pov-

erty. Severe with himself, he was most considerate towards others, "embracing them like a mother does her children." When the Austrian army was stricken by plague, he cared for the spiritual and bodily needs of the soldiers in such a manner that he was honored with the title, "Father of the fatherland."

His devotion toward the Mother of God was truly remarkable. Trusting in her intercession and that of other saints, he often begged God for the grace of sacrificing his life in vindication of the Catholic faith. The occasion came when he was appointed to lead the mission for the conversion of Grisons (in Switzerland); heroically he suffered a martyr's death and sanctified with his blood the first-fruits of martyrdom in the Capuchin Order (1622). *Application.* Fidelis — true till death! Steadfast in faith and in love toward Christ. His name was a program for life; may it be the same for us, at least today.

2. **Holy Mass (Protexisti).** The Mass is from the Common of a Martyr in Paschaltide. It is the first time that an entire formulary is from the Common, with no modifications. Explanation on page 314.

April 25

ST. MARK, Evangelist

Arise, Lord, help us and redeem us for Your Name's sake

This invocation is chanted in today's Rogation procession.

1. **Rogation Day.** The Roman calendar contains four Rogation days: one on April 25 (St. Mark's day), and three before the feast of the Ascension (in Latin, *Litaniae majores et minores*). On these days the Church petitions intensively that God in His mercy will grant all temporal and spiritual needs, particularly a good harvest.

In the ancient Church Rogation days were quite common;

some recurred annually, others were introduced at times of particular need, e.g., averting war or pestilence. Today's Rogation observance dates to the time of Gregory I (about 600). This Pope affixed a Rogation procession to April 25, on which day, according to ancient Roman tradition, St. Peter came to the Holy City for the first time. He also made St. Peter's the day's station church. April 25 was chosen to offset pagan Rome's *Robigalia*, a celebration with processions in honor of the harvest god. There was no connection with the feast of St. Mark, which was subsequently assigned to this date. That is why the Rogation procession is invariably held on this day, even though the feast of St. Mark is transferred.

The liturgical celebration of Rogation day consists in a procession followed by the Rogation Mass. In this procession we have a last remnant of the old stational observance held almost daily during Lent and Easter week. The Christians of Rome assembled at a specified church (*ecclesia collecta*, hence the word "Collect"), and from there marched in procession with bishop and clergy to the station church where Mass was celebrated. On the way the Litany of the Saints and the *Kyrie, eleison* were chanted.

The four Rogation days have preserved the main elements of this venerable rite, an observance that we should respect and foster. For we should pray both *perseveringly* and *in common*, since special efficacy and power is attached to such prayer. During the Rogation procession the Litany of the Saints is sung; we call upon the entire Church triumphant to intercede in our behalf. And the Litany's concluding prayers are unusually beautiful and edifying.

2. **The Rogation Mass (Exaudivit).** Every unit in the Rogation Mass consoles us with the promise of God's favorable reply to persevering prayer; while the Eucharist Itself is the best pledge and guarantee of divine favor.

Joyfully the *Introit* assures me that my cries to God and my petitions will be heard, that they will find admittance — *introivit, introitus* — into His presence. In the *Epistle* James, the apostle

whose knees were calloused from much praying, teaches that "the unceasing prayer of a just man is of great avail." And the example of Elias should increase our confidence. Penance, too, is inculcated.

Jesus Himself instructs us on the power of persevering prayer in the *Gospel*. Picture His message as a triptych; on the center panel are the consoling words: "Ask, and it shall be given to you." To the right there is pictured the unwilling neighbor who finally accedes to the wishes of his importunate friend; to the left, the child whose requests are quickly granted by a provident father. Suddenly we realize that His message is not mere instruction — it is a real situation and we are the persons involved. Here at Mass we are like children begging and knocking at our heavenly Father's door, at the door of our divine (and very willing) Friend and Brother, Jesus Christ.

The *Offertory* is an advance expression of gratitude, especially for gifts spiritual in nature. In the *Communion* the Lord again bids us pray insistently. And to assure us that our petitions will be granted, our divine "Friend" gives us the "Bread" we asked for, while our heavenly "Father" answers the requests of His children with corresponding blessings.

3. St. Mark. The Church has raised today's feast to its present high rank because St. Mark is the author of the second Gospel. For the same reason he deserves our gratitude, respect, and love.

John Mark, later known simply as Mark, was a Jew by birth. He was the son of that Mary who was proprietress of the Cenacle or "upper room" which served as the meeting place for the first Christians in Jerusalem (Acts 12:12). He was still a youth at the time of the Savior's death. In his description of the young man who was present when Jesus was seized and who fled from the rabble leaving behind his "linen cloth," the second Evangelist might possibly have stamped the mark of his own identity (Mark 15:51).

During the years that followed, the rapidly maturing youth witnessed the growth of the infant Church in his mother's Upper Room and became acquainted with its traditions. This knowledge he put to excellent use when compiling his Gospel. Later, we find Mark acting as a companion to his cousin Barnabas and Saul on their return journey to Antioch and on their first missionary journey. But Mark was too immature for the hardships of this type of work and therefore left them at Perge in Pamphylia to return home.

As the two apostles were preparing for their second missionary journey, Barnabas wanted to take his cousin with him. Paul, however, objected. Thereupon the two cousins undertook a missionary journey to Cyprus. Time healed the strained relations between Paul and Mark, and during the former's first Roman captivity (61–63), Mark rendered Paul valuable service (Col. 4:10; Philem. 24), and the Apostle learnt to appreciate him. When in chains the second time Paul requested Mark's presence (2 Tim. 4:11).

An intimate friendship existed between Mark and Peter; he played the role of Peter's companion, disciple, and interpreter. According to the common patristic opinion, Mark was present at Peter's preaching in Rome and wrote his Gospel under the influence of the prince of the apostles. This explains why incidents which involve Peter are described with telling detail (e.g., the great day at Capharnaum, 1:14f)). Little is known of Mark's later life. It is certain that he died a martyr's death as bishop of Alexandria in Egypt. His relics were transferred from Alexandria to Venice, where a worthy tomb was erected in St. Mark's Cathedral.

The Gospel of St. Mark, the shortest of the four, is used only infrequently in the liturgy. It does, however, have its merits. It is, above all, a Roman Gospel. It originated in Rome and is addressed to Roman, or shall we say, to Western Christianity. Another high merit is its chronological presentation of the life of Christ. For we should be deeply interested in the historical sequence of the events in our blessed Savior's life.

Furthermore, Mark was a skilled painter of word pictures. With one stroke he frequently enhances a familiar scene, shedding upon it new light. His Gospel is the "Gospel of Peter," for he wrote it under the direction and with the aid of the prince of the apostles. "The Evangelist Mark is represented as a lion because he begins his Gospel in the wilderness, 'The voice of one crying in the desert: Make ready the way of the Lord,' or because he presents the Lord as the unconquered King."

4. **Holy Mass (Protexisti).** The formulary is a mosaic of texts culled from the Common of a Martyr in paschal time and from the Common of Evangelists. The Mass begins with our martyr singing a hymn of thanksgiving: "You have protected me, O God — in my martyrdom." Psalm 63 describes his victory over enemies. The *Epistle* and the *Gospel* were selected with reference to Mark as an Evangelist and as a disciple of Christ. In his inaugural vision Ezechiel beheld the four cherubim with four different faces; the fathers of the Church related these faces to the four evangelists, assigning the lion to Mark. The Gospel describes the mission of the seventy-two disciples. Upon His followers, which includes all of us, Jesus imposes the obligations of detachment and missionary zeal.

April 26

STS. CLETUS AND MARCELLINUS, Popes and Martyrs

The Church cries out to us: *"Come forth, daughters of Jerusalem, and behold the martyrs and the crowns with which the Lord crowned them on this solemn, joyous day, alleluia, alleluia"* (Ben. Ant.).

1. **St. Cletus.** According to St. Irenaeus, Cletus and Anacletus were the same person. His reign as pope occurred between that of Linus and Clement, during the lifetime of those who had

known Sts. Peter and Paul. Of Pope Cletus nothing further is recorded than that he adorned the graves of Rome's two illustrious apostles. He received the crown of martyrdom under the Emperor Domitian and was buried in the Vatican alongside the tomb of St. Peter.

2. **St. Marcellinus** was Pope during the Diocletian persecution (296–304). With wise forethought he ordered large rooms to be constructed in the catacombs for liturgical use. Such a chamber in the catacomb of Callistus still recalls his action. According to one ancient account (certainly erroneous), this pope strewed incense before the gods when arrested during the persecution, but later atoned for his weakness by a glorious martyrdom. His grave in the catacomb of Priscilla was an object of highest honor.

Application. The large catacomb caves constructed by Pope Marcellinus for religious services during the Diocletian persecution remind us of the "underground churches" of our own day in Iron Curtain countries. To imagine ourselves present at one of these gatherings would not be spiritually fruitless.

3. **Holy Mass (Si diligis me).** Explanation on p. 318.

April 27

ST. PETER CANISIUS, Confessor and Doctor

Teach the catechism

1. **St. Peter.** *Day of death*: December 21, 1597. *Grave*: St. Michael's Collegiate Church, Fribourg, Switzerland. *Life.* St. Peter Canisius is honored as Germany's second apostle. He was the first German to become a Jesuit (born 1521 in Nijmegen). Tireless as a writer and preacher, he labored unceasingly for the restoration and extension of the Catholic Church in Germany, Switzerland, and Austria. He was a pulpit orator and an author; a counselor to princes and bishops; a reformer of schools of

higher education; a founder of colleges and seminaries. Twice he took part in the Council of Trent.

His most famous contribution was his catechism, a work that has influenced catechetical instruction to the present day. Yes, what you learned in your catechism at grade school is due ultimately to St. Peter Canisius. Because of this little book he was made a doctor of the Church not too long ago. The catechism he holds up before us stresses two points: a) strive constantly to understand more perfectly the truths of your holy faith (adults are often surprised at what they discover upon re-reading the catechism); b) teach the catechism to others. Liturgical prayer and action presuppose knowledge of the catechism.

2. Holy Mass (In medio). The Mass is from the Common of a Doctor (with some substitutions for certain localities). The *Oration* implores the conversion of those who have turned against the Church: ". . . through his exemplary life and teaching may the hearts of the erring be brought to repentance." St. Peter Canisius surely made his own St. Paul's motto: "I became all things to all men, that I might save all" (*Allel.*). During the *Offertory* chant: "Come, my children, listen to me; I will teach you the fear of the Lord," we picture our saint teaching catechism. "With joy draw water from the Savior's fountains" (*Comm.*). This water Canisius discovered for us; now at holy Mass its fountains are bubbling over.

April 28

ST. PAUL OF THE CROSS, Confessor
ST. VITALIS, Martyr

With Christ I am nailed to the Cross

1. St. Paul. *Day of death*: October 18, 1775. *Grave*: Rome, in the Church of Sts. John and Paul on the Caelian Hill. *Picture*: as a Passionist, with instruments of Christ's crucifixion. *Life.* The

saint was an Italian by birth. From earliest youth he cherished a tender devotion to the crucified Savior. This he made the subject of many long meditations, and moreover mortified his impatient body with nightly vigils, flagellations, and fasts. Every Friday his drink consisted of a mixture of vinegar and gall.

Because of his yearning for martyrdom, he desired to join the expedition which the Venetians were preparing against the Turks. But when he realized that such was not the will of God in his regard, he put aside this type of weapon to enlist in a nobler army and devote body and mind to protecting the Church and benefiting souls. After ordination he formed the confraternity of "Passionists" whose purpose was to meditate on the passion of Christ and to labor for the conversion of sinners by giving sermons on the sufferings of Christ. Great was the saint's zeal for souls, and great the fruit of his preaching. He died in 1775, far advanced in years. His body rests in the Church of Sts. John and Paul on the Caelian Hill, the site of the Order's motherhouse and the residence of its General. The Congregation of the Passion has spread throughout the world with most remarkable spiritual success.

While celebrating Mass, Paul of the Cross could not restrain tears of sympathetic love. From him we must again learn the simple truth that the liturgy itself is the greatest and most excellent means of venerating Christ's sacred passion on earth. Every true Christian must be inspired by love, love for the Cross and for Christ crucified.

2. **St. Vitalis.** The lives of saints who lived in subapostolic times are, for the most part, interwoven with legend. This applies in the case of St. Vitalis, the husband of St. Valeria. He came to Ravenna on the day when the physician Ursicinus was being dragged to the place of execution, condemned to die because of his faith. When Vitalis noticed that the excruciating tortures were making Ursicinus waver, he cried out: "Physician Ursicinus, you have healed others; see that you do not kill your own soul!" Encouraged and strengthened, Ursicinus joyfully obtained the crown of martyrdom. Thereupon, Vitalis was taken,

tortured, and thrown into a deep pit where he died (around the year 170). His name is commemorated in the canon of the Mass according to the Milanese rite. Scientific scholarship has shown that there is no historical basis for the statement in today's Martyrology according to which he was the father of Sts. Gervase and Protase. In honor of St. Vitalis the Emperor Justinian erected a magnificent church in Ravenna; still extant in it are many mosaics of considerable interest from the liturgical point of view. In Rome a station church is dedicated to him (see Friday after the second Sunday of Lent).

3. **Holy Mass (Christo confixus).** The formulary is a new composition that reflects the life of the saint and at the same time serves as a canticle on love of the Cross. The Mass begins with a Pauline passage, "With Christ I am nailed to the Cross. It is now no longer I that live, but Christ lives in me." The psalm verse voices the saint's zeal for souls. These two virtues, zeal for souls and love of the Cross, are also emphasized in the *Epistle* and *Alleluia*: "If we suffer with Him, we shall also be glorified with Him." In the *Gospel* our saint appears with the seventy-two disciples whom Jesus sent forth poor and detached. Both processionals are quite exceptional; first, we enter into the death of the Savior who offers Himself as "an oblation and a sacrifice" (*Off.*), then we partake (*Communicantes*—Communion) of the sufferings of Christ and by way of anticipation, of His glory (*Comm.*).

April 29

ST. PETER, Martyr

A martyr for the Creed

1. **St. Peter.** *Day of death*: April 6, 1252. *Grave*: in the Church of St. Eustorgio, Milan. *Life*. Peter entered the Dominican Order in 1221, the year when St. Dominic died. He was a zealous preacher, and as Inquisitor converted many heretics.

While attending school at the age of seventeen, he was asked by his uncle, a heretic, what he was learning. Candidly the boy replied, "The Apostles' Creed." Neither threats nor honeyed words from father and uncle were able to shake the boy's steadfast faith. Years later, when death was near, he once more recited the Apostles' Creed that he prayed so courageously in his youth. The mortal stab soon fell, and he received the martyr's crown.

Application. As he lay dying, it is said, Peter wrote the word *Credo* on the ground with his own blood. To us also may the Creed be a source of blessing in life and in death! To that end we might occasionally meditate on one or another of its articles. Devoutly, reverently the words should pass our lips, especially at Mass. Remember that martyrs' blood has flowed for all its phrases.

The Mass (*Protexisti*) is from the Common of a Martyr in paschal time (cf. p. 314).

April 30

ST. CATHERINE OF SIENA, Virgin

Behold, the Bridegroom comes — go out to meet Christ the Lord

St. Catherine. *Day of death*: April 29, 1380; canonized 1461. *Grave*: at Rome, in the Church of Santa Maria sopra Minerva. *Picture*: as a Dominican nun with a cross on her arm, sometimes with a crown of thorns. *Life.* Catherine, the youngest of twenty-five children, was born in Siena on March 25, 1347. During her youth she had to contend with great difficulties on the part of her parents. They were planning marriage for their favorite daughter; but Catherine, who at the age of seven had already taken a vow of virginity, refused. To break her resistance, her beautiful golden brown tresses were shorn to the very skin and she was forced to do the most menial tasks. Undone by her

patience, mother and father finally relented and their child entered the Third Order of St. Dominic.

Unbelievable were her austerities, her miracles, her ecstasies. The reputation of her sanctity soon spread abroad; thousands came to see her, to be converted by her. The priests associated with her, having received extraordinary faculties of absolution, were unable to accommodate the crowds of penitents. She was a helper and a consoler in every need. As time went on, her influence reached out to secular and ecclesiastical matters. She made peace between worldly princes. The heads of Church and State bowed to her words. She weaned Italy away from an anti-pope, and made cardinals and princes promise allegiance to the rightful pontiff. She journeyed to Avignon and persuaded Pope Gregory XI to return to Rome. Even though she barely reached the age of thirty-three her accomplishments place her among the great women of the Middle Ages. The virgin Catherine was espoused to Christ by a precious nuptial ring which, although visible only to her, always remained on her finger.

The Mass (*Dilexisti*), the beautiful bridal Mass.

May 1

ST. JOSEPH THE WORKMAN

O Holy Workman, be thou the guardian over all our work, alleluia

1. Historical Background. On May 1, 1955, Pope Pius XII instituted the feast of St. Joseph the Workman and selected May 1 as the date for its liturgical observance. By this move the Sovereign Pontiff of Christendom consecrated and sanctified a day dedicated to labor and the workingman in certain countries of the world. In the address given on the occasion of the feast's inauguration, Pius XII expressed the wish that it would con-

tribute significantly to a universal appreciation of the high dignity of labor. The theology and noble ideals expressed in the new Mass and Office should imbue and help guide the various associations of workers in their efforts to establish the proper balance between rights and duties, as well as inspire those whose function it is to make laws for their fellowman. We may say that in this manner May 1 was "baptized," and now as a liturgical feast it serves as a constant incentive to the modern workingman, his employer, and the government to continue their striving toward the realization of a better social order.

2. **Holy Mass (Sapientia reddidit).** A new formulary was composed for today's feast, with Ps. 126 as its theme: "Unless the Lord build the house, they labor in vain who build it." Wouldn't this be a fine text to display wherever men are at work? By these words the Church is solemnly reminding the world: upon God's blessing everything is dependent, in one's private life as well as in great public endeavors. Therefore prayer must accompany work, and work must not become divorced from the honor of God.

The *Introit*, culled from the Book of Wisdom (10:7), tells us what Wisdom (Christ, the eternal Son of God) gives to the just man (Joseph, "who was a just man" — Matth. 1:19) for his sweat and labor. The *Collect* recalls "the law of work" that God imposed upon mankind. Paul, who labored "more abundantly than all others" in the vineyard of the Lord, preaches to us on the Christian law of work in the *Epistle*, "Do all things in the Name of the Lord Jesus! Work, with all your heart in it, as for the Lord — not for men; for you know that you will receive from the Lord a (heavenly) inheritance as your pay. Labor for the Lord Christ."

The *Gospel* recounts how the townsmen of Nazareth took offense at the "carpenter's Son." Do not overlook the deep implications of the passage; for the words of the Gospel that tell of the carpenter's Son proclaims the feast's joyous new message. The same text, accordingly, occurs again for the *Communion*.

At the *Offertory* we beg God's blessing upon the "work of our hands" as we carry to the altar the "gifts of the work of our hands" as an offering. These gifts, through the holy Sacrifice, become for us "a pledge of unity and peace" (*Secr.*).

Our participation in the sacred mystery helps to heal the deficiencies in our daily work; and having thus become perfected, we may look forward confidently to the eternal *praemia.* This is our *Postcommunion* prayer, and we hope to receive our request through "the intercession of St. Joseph."

The new formulary, especially if we would add the Hours of Divine Office, presents a fine synthesis of norms and ideals touching upon the various aspects of human labor. The Church has recognized a need and has used the liturgy as a means of meeting it.

O saintly Workman, Model of all workers,
Teach us the lessons of good Christian living,
That all our labor and our very workshops
May be made holy!
(*Hymn at Matins*)

May 2

ST. ATHANASIUS, Bishop and Doctor

When they persecute you in one town, flee to another

1. **St. Athanasius.** *Day of death*: May 2, 373. *Grave*: in Holy Cross Church, Venice. *Life.* A champion of orthodoxy! He did not die a martyr, but his life was martyrdom in the truest sense. Athanasius was the Church's greatest hero in the battle against Arianism (a heresy that denied Christ's divinity). Even as a young deacon at the Council of Nicea (325), he was recognized as "Arius' ablest enemy" and the foremost defender of the Church's faith. After the death of his bishop (328), "the entire

Catholic congregation with one accord, as one soul and body, voiced the wish of the dying bishop Alexander that Athanasius should succeed him. Everyone esteemed him as a virtuous, holy man, an ascetic, a true bishop."

There followed fifty years of constant conflict. Under five emperors and by exile on five different occasions, he gave testimony to the truth of the Catholic position. His allegiance to the Church never wavered, his courage never weakened. As consolation in the face of horrendous calumnies and cruel persecution, Athanasius looked to the unwavering love of his Catholic people. Even time brought no mitigation in Arian hatred. For five years he hid in a deep, dry cistern to be safe from their raging wrath and their attempts to assassinate him. The place was known only to one trusted friend who secretly supplied necessary food.

That Athanasius enjoyed God's special protection should have been obvious to all. On one occasion when the emperor's assassins were pursuing him, Athanasius ordered the ship on which he was fleeing to double-back and sail upstream so that he might meet and by-pass his persecutors. Not recognizing the boat upon meeting in semi-darkness, they naively asked whether the ship carrying Athanasius was still far ahead. Calmly and truthfully Athanasius himself called back, "He is not far from here." So his persecutors kept sailing on in the same direction, allowing the saint to complete his escape.

Preserved by divine Providence through a lifetime of trial and danger, he finally died in his own quarters at Alexandria during the reign of the Emperor Valens (373). Athanasius enriched Christian literature with many important works, some pointed toward piety and edification, others polemical and dogmatic in nature. He ruled the Church of Alexandria for forty-six years.

2. **Holy Mass (In medio).** The great figure of Athanasius is easily recognized in the variable parts of the Mass. During the *Introit* he stands "in our midst," preaching God's word. In the *Epistle* the saint uses words from the great apostle of the Gentiles to describe his own efforts and sufferings in behalf of the Gospel,

"Always bearing about in our body the dying of Jesus, so that the life also of Jesus may be made manifest in our mortal flesh."

The *Alleluia* praises his priestly office, a reflection of Christ's high priesthood. "When they persecute you in one town, flee to another" are words from the *Gospel* that were constantly being verified in Athanasius' life of flight and exile. It was the quiet intimacy of our Lord's Eucharistic visitations that gave him the needed strength; may the same be true for us (*Comm.*).

May 3

THE FINDING OF THE HOLY CROSS ST. ALEXANDER AND COMPANIONS

As Moses lifted up the serpent in the desert, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up

1. The Finding of the Holy Cross. Originally today's feast was observed on September 14, while the Exaltation of the Holy Cross was celebrated today. At a later date the Western Church reversed the two observances. Legend gives these details on the finding of the Cross. After Constantine's brilliant victory through the Cross which had appeared in the heavens (313), the Empress Helen made a pilgrimage to Jerusalem in order to discover the actual Cross on which Christ had died. On the spot where the Cross had originally stood, they found a temple of marble to the goddess Venus. When the site had been cleared, not only

were three crosses found deeply buried in the ground, but also Pilate's inscription a short distance away. It was impossible, however, to establish to which of the three the inscription had been affixed.

Then occurred the following miracle. Macarius, the bishop of Jerusalem, besought God fervently in prayer and then touched a woman who was seriously sick with each of the three crosses. No relief came upon contact with the first and second, but when touched by the third, she recovered instantly. Without delay the Empress ordered the erection of a glorious basilica on the site where the Cross of salvation had been found. In this basilica she left a portion of the true Cross encased in a silver reliquary; another portion she gave to her son, Constantine, who ordered it preserved in the Church of the Holy Cross in Jerusalem at Rome. She also gave her son the three nails with which our Savior had been fastened to the Cross. Constantine thereupon decreed that crosses must never again be used as instruments of punishment. Thus the Cross, once a sign of shame and ignominy, became the object of veneration and praise.

Today we celebrate the memory of this miraculous discovery. The sacred wood of the Cross, the instrument of man's redemption, the wood sanctified by the touch of Christ's sacred limbs and precious Blood, certainly deserves the highest veneration. No relic is its equal. With special delight the Church celebrates this feast during Easter time, because Christ's victory on the Cross is so near and vivid. It is not as the instrument of suffering, but as the standard of triumph against the blazing light of Easter glory that we see the Cross today: "You are nobler than any cedar! On you hung the Life of the world, on you Christ triumphed and death conquered death forever, alleluia" (*Ben. Ant.*).

Cross and resurrection complement each other, the one cannot exist without the other. During His lifetime our Lord always referred to the resurrection when prophesying about His passion and death. The Church follows His example in Lent and Holy Week. Easter joy may be detected in many passion chants. And,

inversely, during Easter time the Cross is never wholly absent. This was brought out quite strikingly in the Office until the simplification of the rubrics in 1955; morning and evening on ferials and feasts of lower rank there was recited the *Commemoratio de Cruce*:

Antiphon: By rising from the dead, He who was crucified redeemed us, alleluia, alleluia.

℣. Proclaim among the nations, alleluia.
℟. The Lord is reigning from the Tree, alleluia.

Let us pray.

O God, You decreed that Your Son should suffer death on the Cross in order to destroy the enemy's power over us; now grant that we, Your servants, might obtain the grace of resurrection. Through Christ our Lord.
℟. Amen."

2. **Holy Mass (Nos autem).** It is the "exaltation" of Christ and Christianity through the symbol of the Cross that the Mass formulary underscores. In the Cross is "salvation, life, and resurrection" (*Intr.*). Because of His obedience even to death on a cross, Christ was exalted so highly that every knee must bend before Him; this should be sufficient proof that only through humility and self-abasement will we obtain beatitude and heaven's glory (*Epist.*). From the Cross as throne our King rules all nations (*Allel.*).

An interesting point may be noted here. Psalm 95 contains the following verse, "Proclaim among the nations that the Lord is King." In ancient times it became the custom to add: ***a ligno*** — from the Tree, making the verse read: "The Lord is King (is reigning) from the Tree." Few pictures were as appealing to the Christians of the time as that of Christ enthroned as King upon a Cross. The Cross was His throne and from it He "draws all things to Himself." Christian piety and devotion always approach the Cross with sentiments of deepest love, "Sweet the wood and sweet the nails that bore so sweet a Burden."

In the *Gospel* we listen to Jesus and Nicodemus conversing with each other by night. The profoundest truths of our holy faith are touched upon: rebirth through baptism, the ascension, the mission of the Holy Spirit, and what strikes us particularly today, the "exaltation" on the Cross. "And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the desert, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up, that those who believe in Him may not perish, but may have life everlasting."

At the *Offertory* I am happy that the hand of the Lord has also "exalted" me; "I shall not die" because by participating in the holy Sacrifice, the graces of the Cross come to me in fullest measure. The Gospel message becomes objective reality on the supernatural level. In the night time of this earthly life we, like Nicodemus, go to Christ, the eternal Light; from Him we receive at Mass not only instruction, but the grace of rebirth as well; thus we are "drawn" by the glorified Savior enthroned on the Cross.

The Mass is our finding of the Cross. Here we "find" the treasure *par excellence*, the price of our redemption; here we pluck the fruit from the Tree of life; and from here we carry the Banner of victory into the battle of life after the *Ite, missa est*. It is also a *finding* of the Cross when we begin to see glory and triumph in the humiliations of daily life; when we greet our crosses as "salvation, life, and resurrection"; when we evaluate the crosses of life as "exaltation" rather than abasement, as the means to life rather than as miserable annoyances.

"Save us, O Christ our Savior, through the power of the Cross!"

3. St. Alexander and Companions. Alexander I was the fifth successor to St. Peter, about 106–115. In the catacomb that bears his name on the Via Nomentana were found pieces of an inscription dedicated in his honor. Together with Alexander, the priests Eventius and Theodulus received the martyr's crown. St. Juvenalis, bishop of Narni, died on the same day (376). The relics of the martyrs Alexander, Eventius and Theodulus are now interred in the Churches of Sts. Praxedes and Sabina in Rome.

May 4

ST. MONICA, Widow

The fame of virtue,
greater than praise for deeds,
adorns you,
fortunate mother of such a son
(Epitaph of Consul Bassus)

1. St. Monica. *Day of death*: during November 387. *Grave*: once in the Church of St. Aurea at Ostia; since 1430, in the Church of St. Augustine at Rome. (According to some her body reposes in Arvastia, Belgium.) *Life*. St. Monica is an example of those holy matrons of the ancient Church who proved very influential in their own quiet way. Through prayer and tears she gave the great Augustine to the Church of God, and thereby earned for herself a place of honor in the history of God's kingdom on earth.

The Confessions of St. Augustine provide certain biographical details. Born of Christian parents about the year 331 at Tagaste in Africa, Monica was reared under the strict supervision of an elderly nurse who had likewise reared her father. In the course of time she was given in marriage to a pagan named Patricius. Besides other faults, he possessed a very irascible nature; it was in this school of suffering that Monica learned patience (our virtue for the week). It was her custom to wait until his anger had cooled; only then did she give a kindly remonstrance. Evil-minded servants had prejudiced her mother-in-law against her, but Monica mastered the situation by kindness and sympathy.

Her marriage was blessed with three children: Navigius, Perpetua, who later became a nun, and Augustine, her problem child. According to the custom of the day, baptism was not administered to infants soon after birth. It was as an adolescent that Augustine became a catechumen, but possibly through a premonition of his future sinful life, Monica postponed his baptism even when her son desired it during a severe illness (1, 11).

When Augustine was nineteen years old, his father Patricius died; by patience and prayer Monica had obtained the conversion of her husband (9, 9).

The youthful Augustine caused his mother untold worry by indulging in every type of sin and dissipation. As a last resort after all her tears and entreaties had proved fruitless, she forbade him entrance to her home; but after a vision she received him back again. In her sorrow a certain bishop consoled her: "Don't worry, it is impossible that a son of so many tears should be lost."

When Augustine was planning his journey to Rome, Monica wished to accompany him. He outwitted her, however, and had already embarked when she arrived at the docks. Later she followed him to Milan, ever growing in her attachment to God. St. Ambrose held her in high esteem, and congratulated Augustine on having such a mother. At Milan she prepared the way for her son's conversion. Finally the moment came when her tears of sorrow changed to tears of joy. Augustine was baptized. And her lifework was completed. She died in her fifty-sixth year, as she was returning to Africa. The description of her death is one of the most beautiful passages in her son's famous "Confessions."

2. **Holy Mass (Cognovi).** Like a mirror the Mass reflects the saintly life of this noble woman. Monica served God in holy fear, immaculate in every deed (*Intr.*). The *Oration* expressly refers to the tears by which she as a pious mother effected the conversion of her son. The *Gospel* recounts the restoration to life of the son of the widow of Naim; this miracle portrays Augustine's conversion of sinners in every age through the tears of holy Mother Church! A widow's function in the apostolic Church is the *Epistle's* burden, exemplified, of course, in Monica. The several chant-texts are culled from the Church's bridal song (Ps. 44), and remind us of Monica's love for Christ.

3. **St. Florian.** "At Lorch, Austria, the holy martyr Florian. Under the emperor Diocletian, the governor Aquilinus ordered him to be thrown into the Enns after a heavy stone had been bound to his neck" (Martyrology).

4. **The Death of St. Monica.** "The day on which she was to die came closer and closer. It was a day unknown to us, but You were fully aware of it. I firmly believe that in Your inscrutable ways You had arranged that she and I were alone at the window and looking out into the inner garden of that house on the Tiber at Ostia. Away from the crowds, we had retired there after a long and tiresome journey to renew our strength for the ocean voyage.

"It was a sweet and pleasant talk we had together in the peaceful and quiet retreat, our thoughts straining forward to what is before, forgetting what is behind (Phil. 3:13). In Your presence, You who are Truth Itself, we would ask each other how wonderful the heavenly life of Your saints must be, a life that no earthly eye has as yet seen, nor ear heard, nor has it entered into the heart of man (1 Cor. 2:9). We noted that the fleshly pleasures of sense, even when most intense or presented in the most alluring light, cannot be compared to the joys of eternal life, in fact, should not even be mentioned in the same breath.

"Then, with fervor growing ever more intense, our souls soared up to the Eternal. And we continued speaking. Lord, You know well what we said that day, and how during the conversation the world and all its pleasures dwindled into nothingness. Then my mother said: My son, speaking of myself, nothing earthly delights me any longer. I do not know why I am still here or why I should remain here. I have no further earthly desires. There had been one thing for which I had wanted to remain a little while in this world — to see you a Christian and a Catholic before I died. God has granted my wish fully, since I now see that you are His servant, one who despises all earthly goods. Why, then, do I remain on earth?

"How I answered, I do not know. But soon after, perhaps less than five days, she was stricken by a fever. One day during her illness she temporarily lost consciousness. We hastened to her side. Soon, however, she became normal again, and upon seeing us, my brother and me, standing at her bedside, she said inquiringly: What has happened? And when she realized that we

were wholly upset with grief, she said: Here you will bury your mother.

"In silence I struggled against tears. My brother replied to the effect that he would prefer her to die at home rather than in a foreign land. When she heard this, she punished him by an anguished look for having thought such things. Then she looked to me and said: Did you hear what he said! And then she enjoined on both of us: Bury this body wherever it may be, and do not let it bother you further. The one thing that I do ask of you is a memento at the altar of the Lord, and that wherever you happen to be.

"When she had said this as best she could, she became silent, and her sickness grew worse. But I could not forget how often and with what anxiety she had made preparations to be interred beside her husband. It was on the ninth day of her illness, when she was 55 years old and I was 33, that the pure and holy soul of my mother was released from her body. I pressed her eyelids together. Then my heart was overwhelmed by grief and it welled up in tears. Only my resolute determination restrained them, and my eyes remained dry. And my inner impulses to weep aloud like a child were likewise hushed. For we realized that it was unbecoming to surround this death with loud cries and tearful moaning as is done at the death of evil men, who have gone down to eternal death. Her death was not an unhappy one, nor did she forfeit life everlasting.

"And when she was buried I accompanied that body and I returned without shedding a tear. Nor did I weep during the prayers offered up to You as the holy Sacrifice of our redemption was offered for her soul, even though, as is customary there, the body lay still uninterred alongside the grave. But within the depths of my soul I suffered intensely throughout the day; and in my confused state of mind I besought You, as best I could, to heal my sorrows. But You did not do it; because by this one instance You perhaps intended to show me how even the soul that already nourishes itself on the Word that never deceives may yet be opposed by the tyranny of habit and affection" (Confessions of St. Augustine, 9, 10–12).

May 5

ST. PIUS V, Pope and Confessor

Christianity owes Pius V a debt of gratitude for the Roman Missal and Breviary

1. St. Pius V. *Day of death*: May 1, 1572. *Canonized*: 1712. *Grave*: in the Church of St. Mary Major, Rome. *Life.* Pius V (Fra Michele Ghislieri) is the last pope who has been raised to the honors of the altar.[1] Already as a Dominican he labored zealously to promote the cause of Christ. Elevated to the chair of Peter in 1566, he was indefatigable in carrying out the reforms of the Council of Trent. His contribution to matters liturgical proved tremendously important. In 1566 he published the Roman Catechism, a work of such value that it still is used by many priests. A uniform Roman liturgy resulted from his publication of the Breviary (1567) and Missal (1570).

Well known are his efforts, and more so his prayers, to secure the victory over the Turks at Lepanto (October 6, 1570); this triumph occasioned the feast of the Most Holy Rosary. In private life, Pius V was a model of piety and asceticism. — The Mass, *Si diligis me*, is from the Common of Sovereign Pontiffs (explained on p. 318). A proper Collect in the feast's Mass points out that God "chose St. Pius for the purpose of restoring divine worship." We may well take this occasion to dedicate the work of the liturgical apostolate to this liturgically-minded pope.

2. His Last Pilgrimage. What has been called St. Pius' last pilgrimage is a very inspiring and edifying story. It was April 21, 1572, just ten days before his death. Although quite ill, he desired to visit once more the seven principal churches of Rome with the hope, as he said, of shortly seeing the martyrs in heaven. On foot he made the long and arduous trip from St. Paul's to St. Sebastian's. Exhausted, he finally reached the Lateran. His companions begged him to use a carriage, or to postpone the

[1] Dr. Parsch wrote this work before the canonization of Pope St. Pius X.

remainder of the pilgrimage until the next morning. He answered: *Qui fecit totum, Ipse perficiat opus*, and continued on.

Only towards evening did he reach the Vatican; and there he had the seven penitential psalms and the Passion of Christ read to him. Such was his physical exhaustion that he lacked the strength to remove his camaura (little cap) when the Name of Jesus occurred. On the 28th of April he attempted to say Mass, but found himself no longer able. Fortified with the last sacraments, he breathed his last on the first of May. His last words were from the Breviary:[1]

> O Jesus, from the death of sin
> Keep us, we pray; so shalt Thou be
> The everlasting paschal Joy
> Of all the souls new-born in Thee.

May 6

ST. JOHN BEFORE THE LATIN GATE

The blessed apostle John was cast into a vessel of boiling oil, but by the protection and favor of God, he emerged unharmed, alleluia!

Today we celebrate a lesser feast in honor of an apostle. The liturgy commemorates the dedication of the Church of St. John near the Porta Latina, the southeast gate of the city of Rome. According to tradition, this was the place where our apostle was cast into the cauldron of boiling oil.

1. St. John. To the beloved disciple John and to his brother James, Christ once put the question, "Can you drink of the cup of which I am about to drink?" When they answered in the

[1] Schuster, Lib. Sacr. p. 143.

affirmative, He held out to them the promise of martyrdom by saying, "Of My cup you shall indeed drink. . . ." On the other hand, after His resurrection Jesus replied cryptically to Peter in regard to John: "If I wish him to remain until I come, what is it to you?" (John 21:22). In apostolic times these words were interpreted as meaning that the apostle would never die. In his Gospel, however, John explained that Christ spoke only of the natural death that would be his, as contrasted with Peter's lot.

According to tradition John was condemned to death for spreading the Gospel of Christ about the year 100 A.D., during the persecution of Domitian. At Rome before the Latin Gate, he was cast into a tub of seething oil; by God's special intervention he remained unharmed, and emerged more healthy and vigorous than he had been previously.

The Mass is from the Common of a Martyr in Easter time (*Protexisti*; see p. 308). Note particularly the *Gospel*, that beautiful passage in which Christ prophesied the martyrdom of His beloved disciple, "Of My cup you shall indeed drink." John's wish is now fulfilled; in heaven he may sit at Christ's side and reign with Him.

2. In the Office St. Jerome makes a number of telling observations regarding our saint, including a reference to his martyrdom. "John was an apostle, an evangelist, and a prophet. He was an apostle because he wrote to the churches as their teacher; an evangelist, because unlike the other apostles except Matthew, he composed a Gospel; a prophet, because he saw the secret things of God on the island of Patmos whither he had been banished by Domitian for giving testimony to the Lord, and revealed to us much of what he had seen concerning future events.

"Tertullian relates that John was thrown into a cauldron of boiling oil at Rome, but that he emerged healthier and more vigorous than he had been. With regard to his Gospel there are many points that differentiate it from the other three. Matthew

begins with the human genealogy of Jesus: The book of the origin of Jesus Christ, the Son of David, the Son of Abraham. Luke begins his Gospel with the priesthood of Zachary while Mark commences his with the prophecies of Malachy and Isaias. A man's face is the symbol assigned to the first evangelist because he begins with genealogy; an ox denotes the second, because of the sacrifices offered by priests in the temple; the face of a lion symbolizes the third, because of the voice crying in the desert: Make ready the way of the Lord, make straight His paths. Our John, however, like an eagle soars to heavenly heights, into the very presence of the Father Himself when he says: In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God; and the Word was God."

May 7

ST. STANISLAUS, Bishop and Martyr

They will not believe even if someone rises from the dead

1. **St. Stanislaus.** *Day of death*: May 8, 1079. *Grave*: in the Cathedral at Cracow. *Life.* Stanislaus became bishop of Cracow in 1072 at the age of forty-two. He distinguished himself by heroic fearlessness in the face of a godless king until put to death by him before the altar of St. Michael's Church in the episcopal city (1079). At Assisi in 1253, Innocent IV added his name to the Church's catalog of saints. He is honored as Poland's patron saint.

The Breviary relates the following incident from his life. King Boleslaus of Poland summoned the bishop before a solemn gathering of the nation's rulers and falsely accused him of illegally holding certain property that had, in fact, been purchased and paid for by him in the name of the Church. But when he could not prove the transaction by documents and the witnesses were afraid to speak the truth, Stanislaus promised to bring before

the court within three days the person from whom he had bought the ground, a certain Peter who had died three years previously. His proposal was accepted with derisive laughter.

Then the man of God spent three days in fasting and prayer; and after he had offered the Sacrifice of holy Mass on the third day, the day he was to re-appear in court, Stanislaus commanded Peter to rise from his grave. Upon hearing the bishop's command, Peter immediately came to life, abandoned his tomb, and accompanied the bishop to the royal tribunal. There to the consternation and utter amazement of the king and all his attendants, Peter gave testimony to the sale of the land in question and to the full and lawful payment made by the bishop. Then he again fell asleep in the Lord.

The Mass (*Protexisti*) is from the Common of a Martyr (cf. p. 314).

2. **The Sacrifice of Mass and our Daily Life.** What gripping drama! While at the altar offering the holy Sacrifice Stanislaus dies a martyr's death. Thus he united the sacrifice of his own life with the Sacrifice of redemption; his death became one with that of Christ. Such a privilege is rarely granted. But this much one can and should do, we should strive to unite the various acts of our daily lives with the Sacrifice offered on the altar.

This is possible in two ways. We can take our good deeds and everything we have borne patiently, and offer this as our oblation. Remember the motto of olden times: Never appear before a king without a gift. It is your work and prayer, your sufferings and patience, your longings and fears from which you prepare the bread and wine for your next sacrificial offering. For the Mass is not only Christ's sacrifice, it is yours as well; or better still, it is in Christ that you ought to offer the Sacrifice.

There is still another way of unifying our life and the Mass, viz., to live from the strength that we receive from the altar. That is the import of most Postcommunions — the fruit of the Sacrifice is a life pleasing to God. Christ works in me, suffers in me, prays in me! What the sun is to the physical world, the Mass should be to me.

May 8

APPARITION OF ST. MICHAEL THE ARCHANGEL

St. Michael, defend us in battle that we may not perish in the terrors of the Judgment!

1. Apparition of St. Michael. Of all the angels, none is accorded greater veneration than St. Michael; his cult dates to ancient Christian times. He is the protector and patron of the Church on earth, and leads departed souls into paradise (cf. Off. of the Requiem Mass). Traditionally his feast has been celebrated on September 29; then in the sixth century a feast called the Apparition of St. Michael at Siponte, Gargano, was added locally, but soon spread to the universal Church. What actually is commemorated today is the dedication of this church.

The best known among the apparitions of our archangel is that which took place about 590 A.D. atop Castel Sant' Angelo, and from which the fortification took its present name. In that year, Pope Gregory the Great ordered a great penitential procession on the occasion of a plague; to indicate that his prayers were heard, the archangel appeared and replaced his sword in its scabbard. Today's feast has not proven too popular; that in honor of St. Michael in September is much better known.

2. Holy Mass. The liturgy does not limit its considerations to the archangel Michael, rather it

embraces all the angels, especially those who have the duty of protecting mankind (*Coll.*). The *Epistle,* from the opening chapter of the Apocalypse, mentions angels twice. Actually, however, the whole book is implied ("the beginning for the whole" is a common and basic liturgical principle). The Apocalypse is a veritable treatise on angelology, no other part of Holy Scripture contains so many references to the spirit world. The message of the *Epistle,* therefore, is this: the angels are laboring zealously to accomplish the work of redemption and to repel the evil one; Michael is their leader.

The *Gospel* affords us another opportunity to study liturgical hermeneutics; the pericope was selected solely for its last sentence. The angels guarding the "little ones" (i.e., the children of God) are continually mediating and interceding before the throne of God. How well a single sentence expresses the important role angels play in our salvation (especially when taken in the Gospel context of scandal and seduction). There is drama and emotion in the *Offertory's* description of angels offering incense before heaven's altar (at a solemn Mass the incensation of the altar is an important part of the Offertory rite).

May 9

ST. GREGORY NAZIANZEN, Bishop and Doctor

Holy friendship

St. Gregory. *Day of death*: May 9, 390. *Grave*: his body was transferred to the Apostoleion in Constantinople during the tenth century. *Life.* Gregory, surnamed the "Theologian" by the Greeks, was born at Nazianz in Cappadocia in 329. He was one of the "Three Lights of the Church from Cappadocia." To his mother, St. Nonna, is due the foundation for his saintly life as an adult. He was educated at the most famous schools of his time — Caesarea, Alexandria, Athens. At Athens he formed that storied bond of friendship with St. Basil which was still flaming with

all the fervor of youthful enthusiasm when he delivered the funeral oration at the grave of his friend in 381.

Gregory was baptized in 360, and for a while lived the quiet life of a hermit. In 372 he was consecrated bishop by St. Basil. At the urgent wish of Gregory, his father and bishop of Nazianz, he assisted him in the care of souls. In 381 he accepted the see of Constantinople, but grieved by the constant controversies retired again to the quiet life he cherished so highly and dedicated himself entirely to contemplation.

During his life span the pendulum was continually swinging back and forth between contemplation and the active ministry. He longed for solitude, but the exigencies of the times called him repeatedly to do pastoral work and to participate in the ecclesiastical movements of the day. He was unquestionably one of the greatest orators of Christian antiquity; his many and great accomplishments were due in great measure to his exceptional eloquence. His writings have merited for him the title of "Doctor of the Church."

Application. We too must harmoniously combine the two phases of spiritual life, the contemplative which tends to solitude and the active or pastoral which responds to the need of the times and the good of souls. The Mass is from the Common of a Doctor (*In medio*). Gregory was indeed "a light upon the lamp-stand that gives light to all in the house (Church)." He was filled "with the Spirit of wisdom and understanding" (Intr., Epist.).

The Epistle, *Justus*, is more in harmony with Gregory's contemplative spirit and therefore replaces the usual one in the Common.

May 10

ST. ANTONINUS, Bishop
STS. GORDIAN AND EPIMACHUS, Martyrs

Counsel the erring

1. St. Antoninus. *Day of death*: May 2, 1459. *Grave*: in the Church of St. Mark, Florence. *Life*. He was born in 1389, and at the age of sixteen entered the Dominican Order, where he devoted himself to a life of strict penance. "Against idleness he waged a continual war. After a brief night's sleep, he was the first to appear for Matins; and after Matins he devoted the remainder of the night to prayer, to spiritual reading or to literary work. If, at times, he became too exhausted to remain awake, he would lean against a wall for a few moments and then resume his duties with renewed zeal. Most exacting in observing the discipline of his Order, he never ate meat unless grievously ill. The ground or bare boards were his bed; constantly he wore the hairshirt, and at times an iron chain next to his skin. Throughout his life he preserved his virginity inviolate" (Breviary).

From 1446 to 1459 Antoninus was archbishop of Florence. A true Dominican, he devoted much time to preaching, and was remarkably successful. He was an able pastor of souls and became known as "Antoninus, the Counselor." When bishop he continued to live as a simple and humble lay brother. Against the vices of the rich and powerful he inveighed boldly, courageously. The Mass (*Statuit*) is from the Common of a Confessor.

2. Sts. Gordian and Epimachus. St. Gordian had been a pagan judge before he became a Christian; under Julian the Apostate he was put to death for the faith (362). Epimachus of Alexandria was burned in quicklime (304). The two saints were buried in Rome on the Via Latina, where later a church was erected.

May 11

STS. PHILIP AND JAMES, Apostles

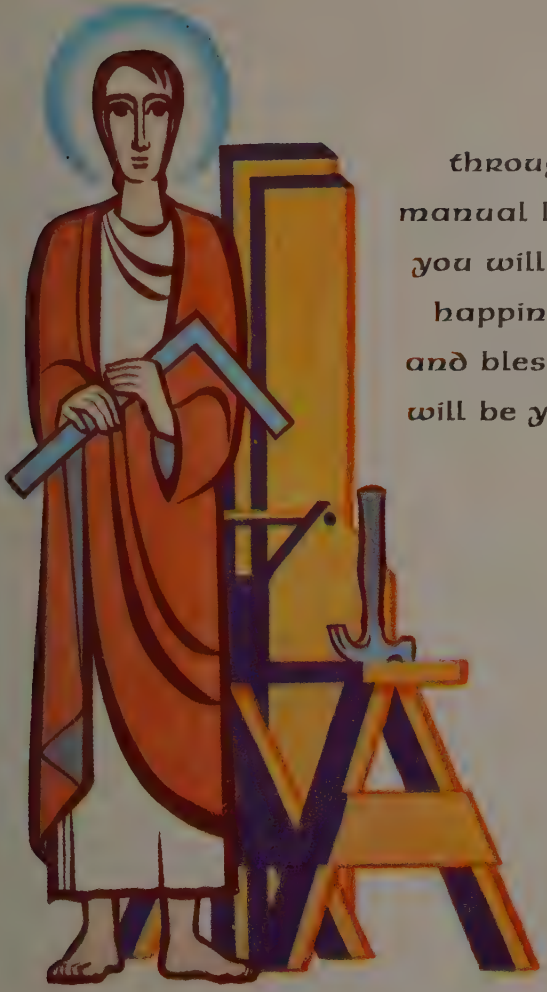
I am the Way, the Truth, and the Life

1. **The Apostle Philip** was one of Christ's first disciples, called soon after his Master's baptism in the Jordan. The fourth Gospel gives the following detail: "The next day Jesus was about to leave for Galilee, and He found Philip. And Jesus said to him: Follow Me. Now Philip was from Bethsaida, the town of Andrew and Peter. Philip found Nathanael, and said to him: We have found Him of whom Moses in the Law and the Prophets wrote, Jesus the Son of Joseph of Nazareth. And Nathanael said to him: Can anything good come out of Nazareth? Philip said to him: Come and see" (John 1:43ff).

More is known of James the Less. He is called "the brother of the Lord," i.e., he was related to Jesus. A rigorous ascetic, he is said never to have cut his hair, never to have used oil for anointing, never to have resorted to baths, but to have prayed so constantly that hoof-like callouses covered his knees. Even the Jews held him in high esteem, as witnessed by the fact that he was given permission to enter the Holy of Holies, a privilege ordinarily reserved to priests. After the ascension of Jesus, he was chosen by the apostles to be the first bishop of Jerusalem.

The Breviary contains a very moving description of his death. "When he was ninety-six years old and had governed the Church for thirty years in a most holy manner, the Jews sought to stone him, then took him to the pinnacle of the temple and cast him off headlong. As he lay there half dead, with legs broken by the fall, he lifted his hands toward heaven and prayed to God for the salvation of his enemies, saying: Lord, forgive them for they know not what they do! While the apostle was still praying, a fuller struck his head a mortal blow."

The Church cherishes a worthy heirloom from James the Less in his Epistle, a book that is devout and edifying as well as highly practical. Relics of Philip and James are in the Church of the



through
manual labor
you will eat-
happiness
and blessings
will be yours

Twelve Apostles in Rome. In 1873, the ancient reliquary was discovered under the high altar where Pope John III (560–573) had concealed it when he consecrated the church. The reliquary contained only small remnants of bones. (Originally today's feast was that of James the Greater, martyred during the paschal season, not James the Less; nor was it the apostle Philip, but Philip the deacon and evangelist who was honored.)

2. **Holy Mass (Clamaverunt).** The Mass, composed on the occasion of the blessing of the Church of the Twelve Apostles, contains certain references to current conditions. Rome had been liberated by Narses from the power of Totila, king of the Goths. The hardships of occupation and the relief subsequently experienced are reflected in the Introit. For the most part the Mass consists of original texts, only a few being taken from the Common of Martyrs in Paschaltide (*Epist., Allel.* and *Off.*). The *Gospel* is taken from the farewell sermon of our Lord in the fourth Gospel, principally because the passage concerns Philip. Nevertheless, its content is most appropriate for the Easter season.

Now let us celebrate the Mass, directed by Philip and James. During the entire Fore-Mass they are our guides, readying us for the Sacrifice proper. The Christian throng enters the house of God, led by the two apostles. They are experienced leaders, they know the road to Christ. On the way we say: "In their tribulation they cried to You, O Lord, and You heard them from heaven" (*Intr.*). It needs no proof, the road to God is one of hardships and suffering on earth, but it ends in victory and joy. At times the burden of the Cross may seem insufferable, but it is the right road to follow; it is the one indicated by the apostles.

Philip and James continue with us in the *Oration*; the Church mentions their names as she extends her hands pleadingly to God. They will intercede for us. And through their example the work of redemption will penetrate more deeply into our souls. In the Readings the two apostles assume the role of preacher. The *Epistle* proclaims the same message as the Introit, viz.,

suffering is our earthly lot; the apostles too were once derided but now they are princes, God's elect. There is no other road to heaven.

In the *Gospel* we see the two apostles with Christ between them. What a beautiful setting Easter time gives to the farewell sermons of Jesus! He is taking leave of His Church before ascending to heaven. He speaks softly, consolingly. Surely He will return; He leaves simply to prepare a place for us, then He will come to take us with Him so that we too may be where He is. In the midst of earthly troubles we need not be sad; we have a home in heaven. He Himself is readying it.

Jesus set the goal, He also showed the way. Disturbed and saddened, the apostles acted as if they knew neither the goal nor the way. With indulgent kindness Jesus said: I am the Way and, therefore, the Truth and the Life likewise. A lesson of tremendous importance! He is the focal point of our religious life, and consequently the only *Way* to heaven. Therefore we love to come to Mass where as the Way He gives instruction and commands, where as the Truth He speaks the Gospel message, and where as the Life He gives us His very Body in the blessed Eucharist.

Another significant revelation is made in the Gospel — Christ by nature is the Son of God, "I am in the Father and the Father is in Me." When we see Jesus, we see the Father; in Jesus God is most perfectly revealed. Now during the holy Sacrifice Christ appears and in Him the Father. Thus God is literally in our midst.

The sermon is over, our preachers are finished; these many truths are their legacy to us. Now we continue with the Sacrifice of Christ. It is also *our* sacrifice, we must offer it with Him. Therefore in solemn procession we approach the altar, led by our two apostles. There upon the altar they place the sum and substance of lives lived to the full — their joy, their sorrow, their labor for souls. And like an eagle enticing its young to fly into the light of the sun, so the two apostles invite us to

unite our life's sacrifices to theirs and offer all to the Father in union with Christ's supreme oblation.

The two apostles have completed their task. Now they reverently withdraw. They take a position before the Lamb that was slain and yet lives, and offer the Mass with us. In Christ we constitute one great body — the faithful, the apostles, the saints — Christ's mystical Body.

When we approach the altar the second time to take the fruit from the tree of the Cross, our two saints rise and lead us to the table of the Lord. That is why the *Communion* verse always contains some reference to the day's saint. The *Postcommunion* is their petition that we garner from the Sacrifice the graces most needed for a good Christian life. Upon leaving, we invite Philip and James to accompany us; we want them as companions during the day wherever we go, whatever we do.

May 12

STS. NEREUS AND ACHILLEUS, ST. PANCRATIUS, Martyrs
ST. DOMITILLA, Virgin

Happily they celebrate their triumph gained by confessing Christ

1. The Saints. St. Domitilla was the niece of the Consul Flavius Clemens (an uncle of the Emperor Domitian). Domi-

tilla always remained a virgin. Because of her faith in Christ she was banished to the island of Pontia, where according to St. Jerome she "suffered a slow martyrdom."

The brothers Nereus and Achilleus were soldiers. "They joined the army and performed cruel and gruesome tasks on orders from the tyrant. Suddenly they changed their occupation. They became Christians, left the general's godless camp, cast away shield, breast-plate, and bloody weapons, and happily celebrated their triumph gained by confessing Christ" (Epitaph of Pope Damasus).

The Acts of the Martyrs concerning Nereus and Achilleus contain a good deal of legendary embellishment; the main points, however, are historical. They put themselves at the service of St. Domitilla, were baptized supposedly by St. Peter, and died as martyrs. Their remains are interred with those of St. Domitilla in the church dedicated to her honor.

Pancratius was the descendant of a noble Phrygian family. As a youth of fourteen, he came to Rome while Diocletian and Maximian were in power (about 304). He was baptized by the Pope and given instructions in the Christian religion. Arrested for his action, he steadfastly refused to sacrifice to the pagan gods and was condemned to death. With manly courage, he bared his neck for the sword and received the martyr's crown. During the night his body was removed by the pious matron Octavilla, anointed with sweet smelling balsam and interred on the Via Aurelia.

Pancratius is the patron saint of fidelity to oaths. The basilica that Pope Symmachus erected over his remains about the year 500 later became a station church (since 1798 his relics have been lost). On the first Sunday after Easter the saint exhorted the catechumens gathered at his station church to remain loyal to their baptismal vows. The saint warns us to proceed slowly and prudently before taking an oath or vow. But once our word is given we must remain true to our pledge, true unto death itself, whether it concerns baptismal vows, ordination vows, profession vows, or marriage vows.

2. Holy Mass (Ecce oculi). Besides the texts from the Common, today's ancient Mass formulary has several passages of its own in which a more immediate relation to our holy martyrs may be sensed. Psalm 32 ("God, our King") spans the Mass from *Introit* to *Communion* (a sure sign of antiquity). The *Gospel* concerning the royal official and his young son was occasioned by the holy martyrs' service to the emperor, and the boy Pancratius. Do not overlook how well it portrays in mystery the Mass-action; for in the holy Sacrifice Jesus "comes down and heals" us, even as He healed the official's sick son.

3. An Ancient Homily. On today's feast more than 1,300 years ago the great liturgist, Pope St. Gregory the Great, delivered a homily on the Gospel in the basilica dedicated to our holy martyrs at Rome. Following is an excerpt: "Brethren, do not honor your fellow men for their earthly possessions, honor them for the image of God they bear in themselves. Do not esteem what you or what others have, but what you are. Look up to these saints at whose grave we are standing. The world lay invitingly before them, but they trampled upon it with disdain; a long life was before them, and health and wealth and children and comforts and good fortune. While the world was blossoming all about them, in their hearts it had already withered. You see, Christians, how the world shrivels and dies; should it then continue to bloom and blossom in your hearts?

"Death is lurking everywhere, and grief, and trouble; from every quarter we are lashed at and sated with bitterness. And yet with lustful longing we fools love this bitterness, we pursue the fleeting things of earth and cling to a sinking world. And because we cannot stop its fall, we perish with it. The very transitoriness of the world proves its worthlessness and the foolishness of adhering to it. Cling rather to eternal things, my dear brethren, so that you may come to the glory of heaven, a glory that you already possess through your faith in Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns as King with the Father in union with the Holy Spirit, forever and ever. Amen."

May 13

ST. ROBERT BELLARMINE, Bishop, Cardinal, and Doctor

Defend the Catholic faith

1. St. Robert Bellarmine. *Day of death*: September 17, 1621. *Grave*: in the Church of St. Ignatius, Rome (next to the tomb of St. Aloysius). *Life*. He was born at Montepulciano in Tuscany on October 4, 1542, the feast of the Poverello of Assisi toward whom he always cherished a special devotion. The day on which he died, September 17, is now the feast in honor of the stigmata of St. Francis.

In 1560 Robert Bellarmine entered the Society of Jesus. He easily ranks among its greatest men, illustrious for learning as well as for piety, humility, and simplicity of heart. If it were possible to summarize his life in a single sentence, one that would resolve all the varied activities and accomplishments of his long career, a verse from the psalm might serve: "If I forget you, Jerusalem, may my right hand be forgotten." His most important work was controversial in nature but the impact of his presentation "resembled the final chord in a mighty cantata, a chord that resounded through all the vice and scandal resulting from the internal corruption of the Church of that day, and that chord heralded Mother Church as one, holy, and Catholic" (E. Birminghaus).

Bellarmine also acted as confessor to the youthful Aloysius and John Berchmans. It might be asked why three hundred years passed before the beatification and canonization of Bellarmine. Long ago Bishop Hefele pointed to the reason when he wrote: "Bellarmine deserves the highest degree of respect from Catholics, even though he has not been canonized. Those who labored to besmirch him have only erected a monument of shame for themselves!" Finally in 1923, he was beatified; canonization followed in 1930, and on September 17, 1931, Pope Pius XI declared him a doctor of the Church.

The Mass, *In medio*, with a proper Oration, Secret and Post-

communion. These prayers praise the saint's "wondrous learning and virtue" in his fight for the Church and petition for ourselves an increase in knowledge and wisdom as well as the grace to walk uprightly before God.

2. **Martyrology.** "In Rome, the dedication of the Church of St. Mary of the Martyrs. This edifice had been known as the Pantheon, a temple dedicated to all the pagan gods. During the reign of the Emperor Phocas (610), the blessed Pope Boniface IV removed all pagan abominations and consecrated it to the honor of the Blessed Virgin Mary and all the Martyrs." In ancient times, the feast of All Saints was celebrated on this day; it was later transferred by Gregory IV (d. 844) to the first of November.

May 14

ST. BONIFACE, Martyr

I thank You, Christ Jesus, Son of God

St. Boniface. *Day of death*: May 14, about 306(?). *Grave*: in the Church of St. Alexius, Rome. *Life*. According to certain very unreliable "Acts", Boniface was a Roman citizen who for a time lived in sinful union with a noble woman named Aglae. Upon his conversion he determined to do penance by seeking the remains of martyrs and giving them honorable burial. At Tarsus he found many confessors about to be martyred for professing the faith; he kissed their chains and encouraged them to bear their sufferings courageously, assuring them that everlasting rest would follow a brief struggle. Finally he himself was taken captive, his body mangled with iron hooks, and boiling lead poured into his mouth. In spite of excruciating pain only one cry came from the lips of Boniface: "I thank You, Christ Jesus, Son of God!"

When Aglae, who in the meantime had likewise repented and was devoting herself to acts of virtue, was informed by an angel of the martyr's death, she hastened to inter the sacred remains in a church erected to his honor. His martyrdom took

place on May 14 in Tarsus, a city in Cilicia, during the reign of the Emperors Diocletian and Maximian.

Application. As a penance for his sins, Boniface sought out the remains of martyrs and provided honorable burial. Such an act of penance today would appear strange, even though motivated by love and contrition. And yet it was an act wholly pleasing to the Lord. This penitent became a martyr himself, and suffered the most excruciating torments during which he continuously repeated: "I thank You, Christ Jesus, Son of God!" The Mass (*Protexisti*) is from the Common of a Martyr in Easter time (cf. p. 314).

May 15

ST. JOHN BAPTIST DE LA SALLE, Confessor

Unless you become like little children, you will not enter into the kingdom of heaven

1. St. John. *Day of death*: April 7, 1719. *Canonized*: 1900. *Grave*: in the mother house at Lembrecq lez-Hal near Brussels, Belgium. *Life.* The saint was born in 1651 at Rheims, France. A pious youth, he chose the clerical state and was ordained a priest in 1678. He soon felt a call "to promote the Christian education of the poor and to confirm the young in the way of truth" (Collect). To this end he founded the Brothers of the Christian Schools, a Congregation of outstanding merit which today numbers more than 17,000 brothers in about 2,000 foundations. The saint has played an especially important role in the development of schools for the rank and file of people.

Through the foundation of his congregation he brought into existence educational facilities for youth, together with the first schools for teachers. Out of love for poverty, he resigned his canonicate and distributed all his goods to the poor (Epist.). He was fired by an all-consuming zeal for the souls of youth; toward himself he observed a very rigorous schedule of fasting, flagel-

lation, and other practices of penance. Entire nights he spent in prayer (Intr.). At the age of 68, after years of persecution, humiliation, and hardship, he died on Good Friday, 1719. His last words were, "I pray that in all things the will of God may be fulfilled in me."

2. **Holy Mass.** The Mass (*Os justi*) is from the Common of a Confessor with a special Collect and Gospel. In the latter Jesus sets a little child before us as a model: "Unless you turn and become like little children, you will not enter into the kingdom of heaven." Accordingly, we must be childlike in God's sight, with the simplicity, the innocence, the obedience, and the faith of a child. Secondly, we must love children: "Whoever receives one such little child for My sake, receives Me." In today's Matins St. John Chrysostom says: "I consider the formation of the soul of a young man greater art than that of any painter or sculptor."

May 16

ST. UBALD, Bishop and Confessor

There is a devil, and the Church knows how to meet him

St. Ubald. *Day of death*: May 16 (Pentecost Sunday), 1160. *Grave*: at Gubbio in Umbria. *Life*. The saint was born in Gubbio, Italy, was ordained a priest, and made a canon. Against his own wishes but upon the request of Pope Honorius II, he became the bishop of his native city in 1128. In this capacity he was a model of apostolic simplicity, pastoral zeal, and personal holiness. His aid is popularly invoked against evil spirits. To this day his body remains incorrupt.

Application. The power St. Ubald possessed against evil spirits was repeatedly evident. The Church moves in a spirit world; good angels are all about, while constant vigilance is exercised against inroads by Satan and his devils. The liturgy contains a considerable number of exorcisms and adjurations. Then there are a

series of sacramentals directed against the power of evil spirits, for example, holy water, palms, candles. Hold these sacramentals in highest esteem. The Mass (*Statuit*), from the Common of a Confessor, has a proper Collect: "Through the intercession of St. Ubald may God stretch forth the right hand of His mercy against all the snares of the devil."

2. **Martyrology.** "At Prague, in Bohemia, St. John of Nepomuc, a canon of the cathedral church in that city. When all attempts at inducing him to violate the seal of sacramental confession had failed, he was cast into the River Moldau, and thus earned the palm of martyrdom" (March 20, 1393). The feast of St. John Nepomuc is very popular in many countries of Central Europe.

May 17

ST. PASCHAL BAYLON, Confessor

May our spirit likewise be satiated at the divine banquet table

St. Paschal. *Day of death*: May 17, 1592. *Canonized*: 1690. *Grave*: in the church of the Poor Clares at Villareal near Valencia. *Picture*: as a Franciscan, with a ciborium in vision before him. *Life*. Paschal Baylon (named after the day of his birth and death: Pentecost Sunday—*Pascha Pentekostes*) was a simple, pious shepherd boy who later became an ardent spiritual son of St. Francis and the heavenly patron of adorers of the Most Blessed Sacrament. He belongs to that illustrious circle of saints who, by heroic holiness of life, refurbished the Church's crown that had been desecrated by the heretics of the sixteenth century. He hailed from the Spanish section of Valencia, died at the age of 52. As he lay dead upon the bier, he opened and closed his eyes twice when the sacred species were elevated at the consecration. Leo XIII declared him the heavenly patron of all Eucharistic leagues and societies.

Application. "May our spirit likewise be satiated at the divine

banquet table" is our plea today (Collect). Whoever intends to live with the Church must make the holy Eucharist the primary concern of his life. But he can accomplish this only by participating as actively as possible with the priest in offering the Sacrifice and by receiving holy Communion as part of the sacrificial banquet. The Mass (*Os justi*) is from the Common of a Confessor.

One day Paschal heard the bells of a convent announce the approaching consecration at Mass. Such an ardent longing for God overcame him that, prompted by yearning and love, he involuntarily cried out: "O God, most worthy of all adoration, please let me see You!" Hardly had he uttered the prayer when a glowing star appeared in the sky. As he watched, the heavens opened; the star disappeared and was replaced by a chalice with the Host, flanked by two adoring angels. Christian art has selected this vision to show his chiefest virtue, viz., love for the most holy Eucharist.[1]

May 18

ST. VENANTIUS, Martyr

If he could do it —

St. Venantius. *Grave*: at Camerino, in the church dedicated to his honor. *Life.* When still a boy of fifteen, Venantius was martyred for his faith in his native city under the Emperor Decius (249–251). With heroic steadfastness he endured many and unspeakably cruel tortures. According to legend, he was scourged, burned with torches and hung headfirst over a smoking fire. He was then thrown to the lions; while they lay like lambs at his feet, he preached the Gospel to the people. This induced many pagans to accept the faith. Finally he was beheaded.

Application. Accompanying a hero in a triumphal march fills one with courage and the spirit to meet any challenge. The same

[1]Bihlmeyer, *Vom Leben und Leiden unserer lieben Heiligen*, St. Josef Bücherbruderschaft, p. 494.

is true when we honor a martyr, and meditate on his triumph. How the constancy of today's fifteen-year-old martyr spurs one on! It would be a good occasion to hold a liturgical "Youth Day." The Mass (*Protexisti*) is from the Common of a Martyr in Easter time (cf. p. 314).

May 19

ST. PETER CELESTINE, Pope and Confessor
ST. PUDENTIANA, Virgin

He who humbles himself shall be exalted

1. St. Peter. *Day of death*: May 19, 1296. *Canonized*: 1313. *Grave*: at Aquila (Abruzzi), in the Church of St. Mary Collemaggio. *Life*. The pious hermit and founder of the Celestine Order, Pietro di Morone, was born about the year 1215, the eleventh of twelve children. After the death of Nicholas IV, a conclave which lasted more than two years elected him pope on July 5, 1294. He became known as Celestine V. Only the chaotic condition of the age plus the intrigue of King Charles II of Naples can explain the selection of this holy man, who obviously was not conversant with the ways of men or of the world.

It soon became evident that the choice had not been a happy one. Feeling himself incapable of bearing the heavy burden, Celestine resigned on December 13, 1294, five months after receiving the tiara, and resumed the cherished, simple life of a monk. He was succeeded by Boniface VII who had reason to fear that his opponents might use the former Pope to create a schism. To prevent such a calamity Celestine was detained under careful guard in the castle of Fumone near Anagni, where a replica of his former monastic cell had been erected. Here he passed the remainder of his life in acts of holy penance.

Application. ". . . to place a life of humility above the highest ecclesiastical honors" is our petition in today's Collect. St. Peter Celestine proved it could be done. In what specific way are we

going to imitate him? — The Mass, *Si diligis me*, is from the Common of Sovereign Pontiffs (explained on p. 318).

2. St. Pudentiana. According to an ancient tradition, St. Peter was the guest of the senator Pudens during his stay in Rome. Pudens had two daughters, Pudentiana and Praxedes, virgins who dedicated themselves wholly to acts of charity. After the death of their parents, Pudentiana and her sister Praxedes (feast July 21) distributed their patrimony to the poor. The fact that Puden's entire household of some 96 persons were baptized by Pope Pius I (d. 154) is ascribed to their zealous activities. When Christian services were forbidden by the Emperor Antoninus Pius, Pius I celebrated Mass in their home. The saints were buried next to their father in the catacomb of St. Priscilla. One of Rome's most ancient stational churches is dedicated to St. Pudentiana.

May 20

ST. BERNARDINE OF SIENA, Confessor

At the Name of Jesus every knee should bend

St. Bernardine. *Day of death*: May 20, 1444, at Aquila. *Canonized*: 1450. *Grave*: at Aquila, in the church dedicated to his honor. *Picture*: as a Franciscan holding a sun upon which the Name of Jesus is inscribed. *Life*. Bernardine was born in Carrara, Italy, in 1380. Even as a boy he nursed the sick during a time of pestilence in Siena. During a severe illness he decided upon entering a monastery and becoming a Franciscan. His superiors assigned him the task of preaching, and he submitted humbly despite a throat affliction. God heard his petition, and the ailment was miraculously cured.

A powerful and eloquent preacher (Pius II called him "a second Paul") and a zealous apostle, Bernardine travelled the length and breadth of Italy, inculcating love and reverence toward the holy Name of Jesus (Oration). He exerted a powerful influence

upon his contemporaries, inaugurating a genuine reformation within the Church. Seldom has a saint had so many and so distinguished followers (including St. John Capistran). Upon entering a city, Bernardine had a standard carried before him upon which was the holy Name of Jesus (IHS) encircled with twelve golden rays and surmounted by a cross.

When he preached, this symbol was placed alongside the pulpit; or he would hold in his hand a tablet bearing the divine monogram in letters large enough to be visible to the entire audience. It was also his zealous appeals that induced many priests to put the Name of Jesus on the altars and walls of their churches, or to have little cards with the inscription distributed among the people. At his instigation the public buildings in many cities of Italy were adorned with the monogram suitably enlarged, as can still be seen in Siena (Pastor). At the Council of Florence St. Bernardine labored strenuously to end the schism (1439).

The Mass (*Os justi*) is from the Common of a Confessor. A proper Gospel: "Behold, we have left all things," points to the saint's love of poverty. In the Collect we beg Jesus to give us "the spirit of His love" through the merits and intercession of blessed Bernardine. *Application.* Our saint's glowing love for the holy Name of Jesus fills us with admiration. Keep this blessed Name on your lips, and more so in your heart. It is a Name that always arouses love for Christ. Never use it lightly or irreverently.

May 25

ST. GREGORY VII, Pope and Confessor
ST. URBAN I, Pope and Martyr

I loved justice and hated iniquity, therefore I die in exile

1. **St. Gregory.** *Day of death*: May 25, 1085. *Canonized*: 1606. *Grave*: in Salerno's principal church. *Life.* Gregory VII —

his name had been Hildebrand before becoming Pope — was born about the year 1020. For two years he was a Benedictine monk of Cluny (1047–1049), then he became a cardinal, and finally, in 1073, Pope. A strong character with a remarkable personality, he easily takes a place with the greatest popes in the Church's history.

His life was one long struggle to purify and unify the Church, and to make her free and independent of secular powers. He enacted strict prohibitions against simony (the purchasing of ecclesiastical preferments), clerical concubinage, and lay investiture (appointment to ecclesiastical offices by civil authorities). On this later score he soon became involved in a dispute with the Emperor Henry IV which caused him untold trouble and which finally resulted in banishment and death. But his stand cleansed the Church and restored its status. Gregory died in exile with these words on his lips: "I loved justice and hated iniquity, therefore I die in exile."

Concerning him the Protestant historian Gregorovius wrote: "In the history of the papacy, there will always be two shining stars to reveal the spiritual greatness of the popes. The one is Leo, before whom the terrible destroyer Attila drew back; the other is Gregory, before whom Henry IV knelt in the garb of a penitent. Each of these world renowned men, however, engenders a different reaction. Where Leo inspires highest reverence for pure moral greatness, Gregory fills one with admiration because of an almost superhuman personality. The monk who won without weapons has more right to be admired than Alexander, Caesar, or Napoleon.

"The battles fought by medieval popes were not waged with weapons of iron and lead, but with moral weapons. It was the application and operation of such lofty, spiritual means that occasionally raised the Middle Ages above our own. Alongside Gregory, Napoleon appears as a bloody barbarian. . . . Gregory's accomplishment is a distinctly medieval phenomenon, to study it will always be exciting. The history of the Christian world would lose one of its rarest pages if this stalwart character,

this artisan's son in the tiara, were missing." — The Mass, *Si diligis me*, is from the Common of Sovereign Pontiffs (explained on p. 318).

2. St. Urban, who succeeded Pope St. Callistus (cf. October 14), reigned from 222 to 230. During his pontificate the Church enjoyed peace, because Emperor Alexander Severus forbade the persecution laws to be enforced. Of special interest to us is a decree ascribed to Pope Urban regarding the use made of the gifts offered by the faithful at Mass. "The gifts of the faithful that are offered to the Lord can only be used for ecclesiastical purposes, for the common good of the Christian community, and for the poor; for they are the consecrated gifts of the faithful, the atonement offering of sinners, and the patrimony of the needy" (Breviary).

St. Urban's body was transferred to the Church of St. Praxedes in the year 818, where it remains to this day. Some hagiographers hold that his grave is in the Church of St. Cecilia in Rome. Vintagers honor Pope St. Urban as their patron.

May 26

ST. PHILIP NERI, Confessor
ST. ELEUTHERIUS, Pope and Martyr

You have enlarged my heart

St. Philip Neri. *Day of death*: May 26, 1595 (the feast of Corpus Christi). *Canonized*: 1622. *Grave*: at the Church of St. Mary in Vallicella (in a chapel to the left of the high altar). *Life*. This gracious, cheerful saint was Rome's apostle of the sixteenth century (1515–1595). A peculiar charism was his burning love of God, a love that imperceptibly communicated itself to all about him. So ardently did this fire of divine love affect him during the octave of Pentecost in his twenty-ninth year that the beating of his heart broke two ribs. It was a wound that never healed.

For fifty years the saint lived on in the intensity of that love which was more at home in heaven than on earth. Through those fifty years his was an apostolate to renew the religious and ecclesiastical spirit of the Eternal City, a task he brought to a happy conclusion. It is to his credit that the practice of frequent holy Communion, long neglected in Rome and throughout the Catholic world, was again revived. He became one of Rome's patron saints, even one of the most popular.

Philip Neri loved the young, and they responded by crowding about him. As a confessor he was in great demand; among his penitents was St. Ignatius. To perpetuate his life's work, St. Philip founded the Congregation of the Oratory, a society of secular clergy without religious vows. The purpose of his foundation was to enkindle piety among the faithful by means of social gatherings which afforded not only entertainment but religious instruction as well. Joy and gaiety were so much a part of his normal disposition that Goethe, who esteemed him highly, called him the "humorous saint." It was his gay, blithe spirit that opened for him the hearts of children. "Philip Neri, learned and wise, by sharing the pranks of children himself became a child again" (epitaph).

Application. As a youth Philip Neri often visited the seven principal churches of Rome. He spent entire nights at the catacombs, near the tombs of the martyrs, meditating on heavenly things. The liturgy was the wellspring of his apostolic spirit; it should likewise motivate us to Catholic Action.

2. **Holy Mass (Caritas Dei).** For the most part the formulary is an independent composition consisting of texts which allude to the saint's enlarged heart. The *Introit* refers to the night when he was praying at the graves of the martyrs in the catacombs, and the Holy Spirit came and set his heart on fire with the love of God. The *Epistle* extols the supernatural wisdom of our saint. Philip's love of children is memorialized in the *Gradual*, the enlargement of his heart in the *Alleluia*. Today's saint truly exemplified the servant in the *Gospel*, in whose hands the lamp of God's love was burning and whose loins were girt with acts

of strictest penance. The *Offertory, Secret* and *Communion* likewise allude to the love glowing in St. Philip's heart.

2. St. Eleutherius reigned as Pope from 174 to 189. His is the last name in the canon of popes compiled by St. Irenaeus: "Eleutherius, the twelfth from the apostles, now rules as bishop." St. Irenaeus brought to him a document on the Montanist heresy, and was kindly received by him (177–178). Pope Eleutherius is buried in St. Peter's.

May 27

ST. BEDE THE VENERABLE, Confessor and Doctor
ST. JOHN I, Pope and Martyr

How he loved the Bible!

1. St. Bede. *Day of death*: May 26, 735. *Grave*: at Durham, England. *Life.* Bede occupies an important niche in Church history by bridging the gap between patristic and early medieval times, the era when the Germanic nations had just been Christianized. Through him Christian tradition and Roman culture came to the Middle Ages. He is also honored as the "father of English history." His writings were read publicly in churches while he was still alive; but since he could not be called "Saint," the title of Venerable was attached to his name, a usage which continued down through the centuries.

True Benedictine that he was, his life revolved around prayer and work. On the vigil of the Ascension he felt death approaching and asked to be fortified with the last sacraments. After reciting the Magnificat antiphon of the feast's second Vespers, he embraced his brethren, had himself placed upon a coarse penitential garment on the earth, and breathed forth his soul while saying softly: "Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Ghost." *Application.* How St. Bede loved the Bible! Anyone who intends to live with the Church must keep the Scriptures near — day in, day out. St. Bede explained the Bible to others. At times you too will have this privilege. Use it.

2. Pope St. John ruled the Church from 523 to 526. He travelled to Constantinople to seek aid from Emperor Justinian II against the Arian king, Theodoric. On his return, Theodoric invited him to Ravenna; upon his arrival he was seized and thrown into prison, where in the midst of filth and hunger, he died on May 18, 526. His body was transferred to St. Peter's, Rome. Pope John's efforts to further the veneration of martyrs were well rewarded. When he visited the Emperor at Constantinople, the Greeks acknowledged the primacy of the Roman see. From his hands Justinian accepted the Emperor's crown, and on the feast of Easter he celebrated Mass there according to the Roman rite.

May 28

ST. AUGUSTINE, Bishop and Confessor

For the return of the Anglicans to the true fold

1. St. Augustine. *Day of death*: May 26, 604. *Grave*: in St. Peter's Abbey, Canterbury. *Life*. Augustine was a monk of St. Andrew's Abbey near the Lateran in Rome. With forty associates he was sent by Pope Gregory the Great in the year 596 to preach the faith among the Anglo-Saxons. King Ethelbert of Kent accorded him a friendly reception and permitted him to establish a foundation near Canterbury. He soon baptized the king together with more than ten thousand of his subjects. Augustine performed so many miracles that it seemed as if the age of the apostles had returned. After his burial in St. Peter's, the abbey became the traditional burial place for the archbishops of Canterbury.

Application. Today we honor the apostle who converted England. Although most of the English people are unfortunately separated from the unity of the Church, they do have a deeply religious spirit. The laity, for example, are not without a breviary containing psalms and Scripture readings (an ideal that we our-

selves are just beginning to strive after). The Collect of today's Mass asks God to bring them back into the fold through the intercession of St. Augustine. It was Mother Church's yearning and love for this nation that produced so many saints that prompted her to introduce today's feast.

2. **Holy Mass (Sacerdotes).** Some prayers of the Mass are proper, others are taken from the Common of a Confessor. Augustine the bishop appears in the *Introit, Gradual* and *Alleluia*; Augustine the missionary, in the *Epistle* and *Gospel.* Every missioner is a follower of the seventy-two whom the Lord "sent forth before Him." The Epistle is Paul's touching pastoral apology to the Thessalonians; Augustine uses it to portray his own zeal for souls: "As if a nurse were cherishing her own children, so we in our love for you would gladly have imparted to you not only the Gospel of God, but also our own souls; because you had become most dear to us." Bishop Augustine was the watchful servant whom "the Lord found watching" at the hour of his death (*Comm.*). May the same be true of us, today and when we breathe our last.

3. **Gregory the Great and the Angles.**[1] Before his elevation to the papacy, Gregory happened to pass a market in Rome one day. He saw there, about to be sold, a number of slaves with fair complexion, blue eyes, and wavy hair. Deeply moved, he exclaimed, "Must people with such bright faces be forever associated with the kingdom of darkness!" Then he asked them, "What is the name of the nation to which you belong?" They answered, "The Angles." Turning his thought to the supernatural, he immediately countered, "Angels indeed! And companions of the angels shall they be." The questioning continued, "From what province are you?" "From Deira." *"De ira!* It is from the wrath of God that you shall be saved!" "And what is the name of your king?" "Ella." "It is *Alleluia* that they one day shall sing."

Gregory purchased the slaves and educated them as missionaries. He requested to go to England himself and as a missioner

[1] *Vom Leben und Leiden unserer lieben Heiligen*, p. 527.

to preach the Gospel. But he was deemed indispensable to the Pope, and his desire was not granted. Nevertheless, he never forgot the incident at the market place.

In 590 Gregory became Pope. During the sixth year of his reign he sent Augustine and forty companions to christianize England. Augustine, abbot of the Benedictine monastery of St. Andrew (which Gregory himself had founded), was one of the most outstanding personalities living in Rome at the time. Thus Gregory fulfilled his promise at the slave market.

May 29

ST. MARY MAGDALEN OF PAZZI, Virgin

Suffer, not die

St. Mary Magdalen. *Day of death*: May 25, 1607. *Canonized*: 1669. *Grave*: in the Carmelite convent at Florence. *Picture*: as a Carmelite nun, with a burning heart and a crown of thorns. *Life.* Mary Magdalen of Pazzi, a highly gifted mystic, had made a vow of chastity at the age of ten. She entered the convent of the Discalced Carmelite nuns in Florence, because the practice of receiving holy Communion almost daily was observed there. For five years her only food was bread and water. She practiced the most austere penances and for long periods endured complete spiritual aridity. Her favorite phrase was: "Suffer, not die!" Her body has remained incorrupt to the present day; it is preserved in a glass coffin in the church of the Carmelite nuns at Florence.

Application. Purity of soul and love of Christ are the chief virtues which the Church admires in St. Mary Magdalen of Pazzi. These virtues matured her spiritually and enabled her to take as a motto, "Suffer, not die!" Purity and love are also the virtues which the Church today exhorts us to practice in imitation of the saint (Collect). We may never attain her high degree of holiness, but we can at least strive to suffer patiently out of love for Christ.

The Mass is from the Common of Virgins (*Dilexisti*), the beautiful bridal Mass, one of the finest in the Missal.

May 30

ST. FELIX I, Pope and Martyr

To venerate the saints is to honor the Body of Christ

St. Felix. *Day of death*: December 30, 274. *Grave*: at Rome in the cemetery of St. Callistus. *Life*. Pope Felix I (269–274), a Roman by birth, ruled the Church during the reign of Emperor Aurelian (270–275). According to the False Decretals, he ordered that Mass should be offered over the tombs or graves of martyrs. He officiated at two ordinations during the month of December, at which five deacons and nine priests were ordained, and five bishops consecrated for various sees.

Application. Pope Felix' decree that Mass should be celebrated over the graves of martyrs confirmed an ancient Church custom that has been maintained to the present day; for according to current Church law, every altar must contain the relics of martyrs. This usage is a striking visible indication of the intimate union between the bodies of the saints and Christ's Eucharistic Body and shows us what an excellent reason we have for venerating the saints. They constitute the members of Christ's Body. — The Mass, *Si diligis me*, is from the Common of Sovereign Pontiffs (explained on p. 318).

May 31

THE QUEENSHIP OF MARY

O most serene Queen of the universe, Mary, ever Virgin, intercede for our peace and our salvation.

1. From the Encyclical of Pope Pius XII. With the certainty of faith we know that Jesus Christ is king in the full, literal, and absolute sense of the word; for He is true God and man. This does not, however, prevent Mary from sharing His royal prerogatives, though in a limited and analogous manner; for she was the Mother of Christ, and Christ is God; and she shared in the work of the divine Redeemer, in His struggles against enemies and in the triumph He won over them all. From this union with Christ the King she assuredly obtains so eminent a status that she stands high above all created things; and upon this same union with Christ is based that royal privilege enabling her to distribute the treasures of the kingdom of the divine Redeemer. And lastly, this same union with Christ is the fountain of the inexhaustible efficacy of her motherly intercession in the presence of the Son and of the Father.

Without doubt, then, does our holy Virgin possess a dignity that far transcends all other creatures. In the eyes of her Son she takes precedence over everyone else. In order to help us understand the preeminence that the Mother of God enjoys over all creation, it would help to remember that from the first moment of her conception the holy Virgin was filled with such a plenitude of grace as to surpass the graces enhancing all the saints. Recall what our predecessor Pius IX, of blessed memory, wrote in his Bull *Ineffabilis Deus*: "More than all the angels and all the saints has God ineffable freely endowed Mary with the fullness of the heavenly gifts that abound in the divine treasury; and she, preserving herself ever immaculately clean from the slightest taint of sin, attained a fullness of innocence and holiness so great as to be unthinkable apart from God Himself, a fullness that no one other than God will ever possess."

Spurred on by piety and faith, may we glory in being subject to the rule of the Virgin Mother of God; she bears the royal sceptre in her hand, while her heart is ever aflame with mother-love. — Today's feast was added to the Church's calendar in the Marian year, 1954; its date was selected with a view to crowning the close of May, Mary's month.

2. **Holy Mass (Gaudeamus).** Apart from a few texts from other Marian Masses, the feast's formulary is a new composition. Thematic is the royal origin, dignity, and activity of the Mother of God and the spontaneous happiness welling from the hearts of children doing homage to her. The *Orations* and the chants especially are expressive of the day's festive and joyous spirit. The *Alleluia* verse is typical: "Alleluia, alleluia! You are indeed blessed, O Virgin Mary! Once you stood beneath the Cross of the Lord, alleluia, but now you are enthroned with Him forever, alleluia!

3. **Divine Office.** Here too much of the formulary is culled from the Common of the Blessed Virgin, but key texts are more than sufficient to give the Office a distinctive character. St. Bonaventure, for example, masterfully applies Psalm 44 to Mary's Queenship: "As queen, Mary is ennobled by an incomparable glory. This the prophet clearly shows in that psalm which is devoted particularly to Christ and to the Virgin Mary. Of Christ it is first said: Your throne, O God, stands forever and ever; and shortly thereafter of the Virgin: The queen takes her place at Your right hand, that is, in a place of highest blessing. This certainly was said with reference to the beauty of her soul. The psalm continues: In garments of gold. Here it describes the vesture of glorious immortality which was proper to the Virgin in her assumption. As queen, Mary is likewise the dispenser of grace. For God's grace, a sovereign remedy to the human race, descends upon us through her as through an aqueduct. The dispensing of grace is attributed to the Virgin not as to its beginning, but because of her position through merit. Now by position the Virgin Mary is a most excellent Queen toward her peo-

ple: she obtains forgiveness, overcomes strife, distributes grace; and thereby she leads them to glory."

As a final song to Mary on this last day of the month popular piety devotes to her, we sing a lovely new hymn in her honor at Matins:

O Mary, we proclaim thee Queen!
All creatures round thy throne convene,
To gaze in rapture on thy face
And contemplate thy lovely grace.

In sight of God thy splendor stands
The perfect work of God's own hands;
To Him who gave thee life on earth,
By God's decree thou gavest birth.

As Christ upon the Cross hung high,
A King in robe of bloody dye,
Thus standing at the Cross alone
As Queen and Mother thou wast known.

While we thy praises sing today,
We beg thy mercy, and we pray
That thou accept with sympathy
This public act of faith in thee.

June 1

ST. ANGELA MERICI, Virgin

Lead angelic lives

1. St. Angela. *Day of death*: January 27, 1540. *Canonized*: 1807; her feast was added to the calendar of the universal Church in 1861. *Grave*: in the Church of St. Afra, Brescia. *Life*. The saint was born in 1474, in the diocese of Verona. Early in life she dedicated herself to Christ as His bride. After the death of her parents, she desired to live solely for God in quiet and solitude, but

her uncle insisted that she manage his household. She renounced her patrimony in order to observe most perfectly the rule for Franciscan Tertiaries.

During a pilgrimage to the Holy Land in 1524 she lost her eyesight temporarily. Pope Clement VII, whom she visited in Rome, desired her to remain in the Holy City. Later she founded a society for girls, under the protection of St. Ursula; this was the beginning of the Ursuline Order. St. Angela was almost seventy when she died; her body remained incorrupt for thirty days. Remarkable phenomena occurred at her burial in the Church of St. Afra.

Application. Angela means angel; and our patron saint transformed her name into a life program. This is why the Church prays that we may be inspired by her intercession and example to "lead angelic lives" (Coll.). The particular means to this end is detachment, renunciation of the things of the world, in accord with our state of life. Make some specific resolutions on this matter today. Say a prayer too for the good of the Ursuline Order. — The Mass is from the Common of Virgins (*Dilexisti*).

June 2

ST. MARCELLINUS, Priest; ST. PETER, Exorcist; ST. ERASMUS, Bishop; Martyrs

Present suffering — future glory

1. **The Saints.** *Graves*: The first two were originally buried in the crypt of Tiburtius in Rome. The grave of St. Marcellinus is now in Seligenstadt; that of Erasmus, in Gaeta, Italy. *Lives.* The exorcist Peter was imprisoned under Diocletian; after he had freed the jailor's daughter from the power of Satan, she and the entire family became interested in the faith. Peter directed them to the priest Marcellinus, who baptized them. For this deed Marcellinus too was thrown into prison and treated atrociously. Both were beheaded about the year 303. On an in-

scription Pope Damasus relates how as a child he had listened to details of the martyrdom as told by the jailor himself.

Erasmus was a bishop in Campania. Hot lead was poured over him, but he remained unharmed; he was then clothed in a glowing metal tunic, but again escaped all harm. He died a natural death at the beginning of the fourth century. Erasmus is one of the "Fourteen Holy Helpers."

Application. An exorcist, a priest, and a bishop, representing three gradations in the sacrament of Holy Orders, bear witness to Christ in blood. These men were put to death because they zealously fulfilled their pastoral duties. A practical lesson we could learn from them would be to foster a greater spirit of cooperation between clergy and laity. Means to this end are abundantly provided by the present liturgical revival.

2. **Holy Mass (Clamaverunt).** We hear the martyrs crying in the midst of their torments, but at the same time see them in glory; and our praise ascends to God in the words of the beautiful Psalm 33 (*Intr.*). The merits of the saints are a joy to us; their example, an inspiration (*Oration*). The *Epistle* restates the truth that the tears and hardships of this life cannot be compared with the glory to follow. Paul would have us regard present suffering as the labor pains necessary to a birth into eternal life. Here the martyrs take the lead. In terms of the signs that will precede the final judgment the *Gospel* depicts the passion of Christ's followers. The Lord exhorts His faithful to act courageously, for He Himself will be their inspiration and support. The remaining Mass texts reflect the spirit common to Masses for martyrs.

June 4

ST. FRANCIS CARACCIOLO, Confessor

You are the God of my heart, the God who is my portion forever

1. **St. Francis.** *Day of death*: June 4, 1608. *Grave*: in the Church of St. Mary Major at Naples. *Canonized*: 1807. *Life.*

Francis founded the Order of Minor Clerks Regular. In the course of time he became known as the "Venerable Father, the Preacher of the Love of God," a title merited for promoting devotion to the Blessed Sacrament and introducing nocturnal adoration in his community. He had a childlike love for the Blessed Virgin; his greatest joy was to be of service to his neighbor. God endowed him with the gift of prophecy and the discernment of spirits.

At the age of forty-four, while praying one day in the church at Loretto, he recognized that his end was near. Immediately he went to the monastery of Agnona in the Abruzzi, and exclaimed as he entered, "This is my final resting place." Shortly after, he was stricken with fever, received the last sacraments with deepest fervor, and quietly fell asleep in the Lord.

Application. The Church selects our saint's zeal for prayer and his spirit of penance for emphasis in today's Collect, and proposes these two virtues for imitation. "In imitating him grant that we may make such progress that we may pray without ceasing and constantly have our bodies under subjection." This is not an easy task; the liturgy, therefore, provides the needed assistance, the example of St. Francis, and the holy Eucharist.

2. **Holy Mass (Factum est).** The Mass texts, many of which are proper, point out the saint's heroic virtues, e.g., zeal for prayer: "My heart has become like wax melting within me, for the zeal of Your house has consumed me" (*Intr.*); "As the deer longs for the water brooks, so longs my soul for You, O God" (*Grad.*); "How great is the bounty of Your goodness, O Lord, which You have reserved for those who fear You" (*Comm.*). St. Francis' early death is alluded to in the *Epistle*: "Venerable age is not that of long time, nor counted by the number of years; but the understanding of a man is gray hairs, and a spotless life is old age . . . Soon perfected, he fulfilled a long time for his soul pleased God. Therefore He hastened to remove him from the midst of iniquities." In the *Gospel* he is the watchful servant, with loins girt through penance and the lamp of God's love in his hand.

"You also must be ready, because the Son of Man will come at an hour that you do not expect."

June 5

ST. BONIFACE, Bishop and Martyr

For the restoration of religious unity in Germany

1. St. Boniface. *Day of death*: June 5, 754. *Grave*: at Fulda. *Picture*: as a bishop holding an ax, with a felled oak at his feet. *Life.* A Benedictine monk was chosen by divine Providence to become Germany's great apostle and patron. Boniface's first missionary endeavor proved unsuccessful (716). Before attempting a second he went to Rome and received papal authorization (718). Under the holy bishop Willibrord he converted Frisia within a period of three years. On November 30, 722, Boniface was consecrated bishop by Pope Gregory II.

In 724 he turned his attention to the Hessian people, among whom he continued his missionary activity with renewed zeal. On an eminence near the village of Geismar on the Eder, he felled a giant oak that the people honored as the national sanctuary of the god Thor. Boniface used the wood to build a chapel in honor of St. Peter. This courageous act assured the eventual triumph of the Gospel in Germany.

The resident clergy and the priests dwelling at the court, whose unworthy lives needed censure, were constantly creating difficulties. Nevertheless Boniface continued to labor quietly, discretely. He prayed unceasingly, put his trust in God alone, recommended his work to the prayers of his spiritual brothers and sisters in England. And God did not abandon him. Conversions were amazingly numerous. In 732 Gregory III sent him the pallium, the insignia of the archiepiscopal dignity. Boniface now devoted his time and talent to the ecclesiastical organization of the Church in Germany. He installed worthy bishops, set diocesan boundaries, promoted the spiritual life of the clergy and laity, held national synods (between 742 and 747), and in 744 founded the monastery of Fulda, which became a center of religious life in central Germany. In 745 he chose Mayence for his archiepisco-

pal see, and affiliated to it thirteen suffragan dioceses. This completed the ecclesiastical organization of Germany.

The final years of his busy life were spent, as were his earlier ones, in missionary activity. Word came to him in 754 that a part of Frisia had lapsed from the faith. He took leave of his priests and, sensing the approach of death, carried along a shroud. He was 74 years of age when with youthful enthusiasm he began the work of restoration, a mission he was not to complete. A band of semi-barbarous pagans overpowered and put him to death when he was about to administer confirmation to a group of neophytes at Dockum.

2. **Holy Mass (Exsultabo).** Inspiring proper texts bring to mind the life and virtues of Germany's venerable apostle. The Church hymns her joy over the conversion of the German people in the *Introit*. The psalm verse refers to and praises the saint's missionary work. The *Epistle* exhorts us to praise our forefathers in the faith, first among whom was Boniface. Their memory should continue on in the Church and we should walk in their footsteps. The holy martyr invites us in the *Gradual* to share, as he did, the sufferings of Christ while on earth in order that we may partake of Christ's joy and glory in heaven. In answer, as it were, to the Gradual we hear God's voice proclaiming Boniface's glory in the *Alleluia.*

Then Jesus Himself teaches us the eight beatitudes, eight royal roads to sanctity, and among them is that of martyrdom: "Blessed are you when men reproach you, and persecute you . . . " Visualize the saint travelling through Germany under divine protection as you pray the *Offertory*. The *Communion* indicates his reward, a place on God's own throne — and we receive a pledge of this same reward in the Eucharist. The *Collect* recalls Boniface's missionary activity, and asks his protection. The Eucharistic Sacrifice effects our sanctification and increases our feast day joy (*Secr.*). The *Postcommunion* implores the continual intercession of St. Boniface.

June 6

ST. NORBERT, Bishop and Confessor

We pray and offer sacrifice today for the Premonstratensian Order

St. Norbert. *Day of death*: June 6, 1134. *Grave*: at Magdeburg until 1627 when his remains were removed to the monastery of Strahow in Prague during the Thirty Years' War. *Picture*: as a bishop with a monstrance in his hands. *Life*. Although a cleric, Norbert led a very worldly life for a number of years. The decisive change took place suddenly in 1115. While riding one day, he was overtaken by a thunderstorm, a flash of lightning struck the ground before him, the horse threw him, and he seemed to hear a voice upbraiding him for his conduct.

As in the case of St. Paul, the experience wrought a complete transformation. Norbert decided to give away his property and income rights, and to lead a life of abnegation, devoting himself particularly to preaching. In 1120 he founded the Order of Premonstratensians (the first monastery was at Prémontré) according to the rule of St. Augustine; approval came from Pope Honorius II in 1126.

In 1125, he was named archbishop of Magdeburg. On July 13, 1126, Norbert entered the city and came barefoot to the cathedral. About to enter the archiepiscopal palace, he was refused admission by the porter, who failed to recognize a bishop so poorly dressed. "You know me better and see me with clearer eyes than those who are forcing me to this palace. Poor and wretched man that I am, I should never have been assigned to this place," Norbert answered when the porter later sought his pardon.

The Bohemians honor St. Norbert as their national patron. The Mass (*Statuit*) is from the Common of a Confessor.

The Common of Martyrs in Paschaltide

The high honor accorded martyrs by Mother Church finds its culmination in the special Common granted them during Easter time. This is to show that martyrdom is most intimately associated with Christ's own passion and triumph. The "white-robed company of martyrs" form the retinue for the Conqueror over death and hell. In celebrating the feasts of martyrs, the liturgy seeks to dramatize in mystery St. Paul's dictum: "As you are partakers of His sufferings, so will you also be of the comfort." The two formularies, Common of One Martyr, Common of Several Martyrs, are classic in form and content, and breathe the triumphant martyr spirit of the ancient Church.

1. Common of One Martyr (Protexisti).

The dramatic directness and freshness of the text, indications of its antiquity, impress us immediately. Without much ado the liturgy introduces the saint, has him speak, and projects a series

Pictured is Christ, the King of martyrs and true Vine, on the Cross (holy Mass). The martyrs are the clusters of grapes hanging from the Vine; it was the Eucharistic wine that inspired them to martyrdom. They proclaim the glory of Christ's kingdom (second formulary), and share in Christ's beatitude (aureole and small crown with each cluster).

of pictures descriptive of his life. In the *Introit* the martyr himself sings a hymn of thanksgiving; persecution merely heightened his triumph. On Good Friday and Holy Saturday Psalm 63 (the whole composition must be considered) described the passion of Christ, today our martyr uses it to voice his own sufferings. We hear his cries and lamentations. We see his enemies whet "their tongues like a sword . . . and bend their bow to shoot down the righteous." We observe them devising their diabolical plans. Yet they never win, for their weapons "wound no more than children's arrows!" Enraged and humbled they are forced to acknowledge God's good Providence. But "the just man rejoices in the Lord, in Him glory all the upright of heart."

Equally dramatic is the *Lesson*. In spirit we are present at the last judgment and see both the martyrs and their persecutors. The latter now behold their victims in heavenly glory and cry out in agony and fear: "These are they whom we once derided . . . . Fools, we thought their life madness. . . . See, now they are numbered among the children of God."

The *Alleluia* song voices the reflections of the congregation; heaven and earth, i.e., the heavenly and earthly *ecclesia*, praise and confess God's wondrous designs as manifested in the martyrdom of the saints and in their heavenly reward. In Christian antiquity the word *confessio* or *confiteri* applied in a very special way to martyrs. The martyr was a "confessor" in the highest sense; he had "confessed" the Lord before men, and now the Lord and all the heavenly court "confess him crowned with glory."

At first glance the *Gospel* may disappoint us. As in other martyr Masses, we might have expected Christ's exhortation to take up our cross and follow Him; instead we find the allegory of the vine and the branches. But for what reason? It may be simply an historical coincidence. In ancient times the last part of St. John's Gospel was used as the *lectio continua* in paschal time. Today's Mass formulary undoubtedly dates to that period (see the Gospels for Sundays after Easter and the feast of Sts. Philip and James).

A sensitive soul, however, will detect certain delicate relationships between martyrdom and this figure of the vine. Christ, the King of martyrs, is the Vine that entwined Itself around a Cross; the martyrs are the ripe grapes hanging thereon. The Eucharistic wine, flowing from the wine-press of our Savior's passion, becomes the martyr's inebriating drink. In ancient Christian thinking the three concepts, Cross, Eucharist, martyrdom were so intimately related that one explained the other. In the Canon of the Mass, for instance, there are two lists of martyrs. Our Gospel provides pictorial explanation. Christ, the divine Vine clinging to the Cross, is likewise the Tree of life in the new paradise. The martyrs are the grapes hanging from the Vine; they have proven the Gospel true, for by remaining attached to Christ they have "brought forth much fruit," even the fruit of martyrdom.

We too are branches on the Vine, Christ. Now at Mass the life-giving sap of the Eucharist flows from the stem into the branches, so that we may "bring forth much fruit." The Vine unites us to the martyrs. And it is precisely in the Mass that this union is operative, for the Communion of Saints is a communion both of suffering and of consolation. See how the liturgy and patristics have made us understand the Gospel allegory.

God's great kingdom in heaven and on earth again praise, "confess," and marvel at the wondrous work of the divine Vine (*Off.*). In the *Communion* we see our saint rejoicing at the heavenly banquet, while we, partaking of the Eucharistic banquet, share his joy on earth. (Ps. 63 begins and concludes the Mass.) Note that most chants refer to the saint in the singular.

2. The Common of Several Martyrs (Sancti tui).

This second Mass is equally beautiful and edifying. With the *Introit* there rises a shout of praise from the "saints," (i.e., the martyrs, and we in unison with them). This double choir proclaims the "glory of the kingdom" of Christ. Psalm 144 praises God (or Christ) for His goodness, greatness, and fidelity. It is one of the finer psalms, although unfortunately it rarely occurs in the liturgy. What a beautiful picture the Introit sketches — Christ, the risen King, receiving the praises of His "confessors."

The theme continues in the *Epistle*. Through His resurrection Christ has procured for us an "incorruptible and unfading inheritance" in heaven. Toward this we are moving, even though it be through the dark valley of earthly trials and temptations; *modicum*, only a "little while," however, will these sorrows last. The gold must be purified by fire in preparation for the great day of the "revelation of Jesus Christ," a preview of which we experience with the martyrs at today's holy Mass. Again we see the holy martyrs in their lily-white garments; they are sweet like the odor of balsam, and their martyrdom precious in the sight of the Lord (*Allel.*).

The first three verses of the *Gospel* are identical with the final three verses of the preceding formulary. But taken as a whole, the emphasis is somewhat different. Christ is the divine Vine, and we the branches. It is a figure that touches the liturgy's very soul; there exists no consideration more profound. Both the saints and we enjoy organic union with Christ; from Him we draw the sap of divine life, the wine of the blessed Eucharist. From Him, the Vine, we receive strength to obey the commandments and "to bring forth much fruit." (Cf. comment on the previous Mass' Gospel.) Filled with Easter's joy we proceed twice to the altar with the martyrs; once, to die with Christ (*Off.*), and once to rise glorified with Him (*Comm.*).

In the Divine Office too, martyrs receive special attention during Easter time; some of the shorter texts are particularly beautiful.

> His elect are gleaming white, alleluia;
> Upon them shines God's glory, alleluia.
> They are white as milk, alleluia, alleluia.
> They are purer than snow, whiter than milk;
> they are more shimmering than old ivory,
> more beautiful than sapphire (Resp.).

Come forth, daughters of Jerusalem, and behold the martyrs and the crowns with which the Lord crowned them on this solemn, joyous day, alleluia, alleluia (Ben. Ant.).

The Common of Sovereign Pontiffs

On January 9, 1952, Pope Pius XII introduced a new Common, that of "One or Several Sovereign Pontiffs." In the Breviary this new Common consists merely of an oration and a homily for the third nocturn; all the remaining prayers and texts are from the Common of a Martyr or the Common of a Confessor.

The Mass, however, is a completely new formulary; from the opening words of the Introit it is referred to by the name, *Si diligis me*. The dominant theme of this new Mass is our Savior's promise to Peter as it continues to be fulfilled and realized in the apostle's successors, the Roman Pontiffs. Two of Christ's pronouncements to Peter dominate the text; the words: If you love Me, Simon Peter, feed My sheep, feed My lambs, ring out in the Introit and continue to resound during the first part of the Mass as the "shepherd motif"; while the words, "You are Peter, and upon this rock I will build My Church," occur repeatedly from the Alleluia verse to the end of the sacred service.

The *Introit* departs from classical models by using a New Testament text as an antiphon. Enclosed in its frame, Psalm 29 comes from the lips of the day's saint and pope as an expression of gratitude for the call to shepherd the flock of Christ and for the protection from enemies accorded him in the task. We think of Christ's words, "The gates of hell shall not prevail." (There is no indication that the remaining verses of the psalm are alluded to.)

Reference to the Mass' double theme is easily seen in the two *Collects*. In the first God is addressed as "the eternal Shepherd" who should look mercifully upon His flock and protect it through the intercession of the day's saint and sovereign pontiff whom He appointed as shepherd over the whole Church. The second Oration, which is used very rarely, bases its petition upon the promise, "The gates of hell . . . ."

Appropriately the *Epistle*, a new selection, comes from the

pen of Peter himself. The first supreme shepherd is admonishing his successors: "I exhort the presbyters among you — I, your fellow-presbyter and witness to the sufferings of Christ (Peter was present on Olivet during Christ's agony and seizure), the partaker also of the glory that is to be revealed in time to come — tend the flock of God which is among you, governing not by constraint, but willingly, according to God; nor yet as lording it over your charges, but becoming from the heart a pattern to the flock. And when the Prince of the shepherds appears, you will receive the unfading crown of glory. — The God of all grace, who has called us unto His eternal glory in Christ Jesus, will Himself, after we have suffered a little while, perfect, strengthen and establish us. To Him is the dominion forever and ever. Amen." There is no need to labor the point that this selection significantly enriches the treasury of Missal readings.

The *Gradual*, which by nature should echo the Epistle, associates the words *seniores* and *consenior* with a verse from Psalm 106 and points to the elevation of the day's saint to the Chair of Peter. The *Alleluia* verse anticipates the Gospel, putting into relief its principal message, "You are Peter (the Rock), and upon this rock I will build My Church." Christ's words have been fulfilled in the papacy; for through the ages the popes have proven to be the immoveable rock-foundation of holy Church. The *Gospel* presents Biblical proof that the primacy of Peter and of his successors was divinely willed and instituted. Through the centuries the popes have guided the Church with a sure and steady hand; they have held the keys to God's kingdom in heaven and on earth; and in them we see realized repeatedly our blessed Savior's prophecy that hell with all its powers will not triumph.

Today's *Offertory*, a passage from Jeremias, is usually applied to the Savior's precursor in the liturgy, "See, I am putting My words in your mouth. I am placing you over nations and kingdoms that you may destroy and tear down, that you may build and plant" (Jer. 1:9–10). The divine Shepherd is addressing Peter and his successors; to them He entrusts the work of teach-

ing infallibly; upon them He places the threefold crown (tiara), and with them leaves the power to bind and to loose.

The *Secret* again touches upon the Introit motif: may God's pleasure rest upon flock and shepherd. While the faithful approach the Lord's table, we hear the familiar passage, "You are Peter, and upon this rock I will build My Church." It is a message that applies not only to the day's sainted pontiff, but to every one present before the altar. For each Christian must be a rock in faith and in grace and in love — a rock upon which Christ can build a spiritual church. Holy Communion is part of His construction work.

Classic in form and content, the first *Postcommunion* is pointed less toward individual Christians than toward the Church now "nourished with holy refreshment" through the Eucharist; it petitions guidance, freedom, and purity of faith for the papacy. In the second Postcommunion the shepherd motif is met for the last time; note in particular the phrase parallelism: "The shepherd will not lack obedience from his flock, nor the flock lack the shepherd's protecting care." — All considered, a beautiful and instructive Mass formularly. One might, however, remark that its frequent occurrence (more than 24 times a year) could lessen devotion, while the previous arrangement did offer greater variety.

Mass of Our Lady on Saturday

Since ancient times the Roman Church has dedicated Saturday to the Blessed Virgin. A special Office and Mass in her honor are provided for all Saturdays on which no feast of some rank occurs. The psalms of the Office are those of the feria, Saturday; the remaining prayers are Marian from some aspect. Following the major divisions of the ecclesiastical year, five different formularies are given for the Mass of our Lady on Saturday, viz., 1) during Advent (the Rorate Mass); 2) during Christmastide; 3) from February 3 to Lent; 4) during Paschaltide; 5) after Pentecost. For the present we will limit our considerations to the Blessed Virgin Mass during Paschaltide.

Christianity's noblest inspiration is unquestionably the immaculate Virgin and Mother of God. It was Christ Himself who indicated this repeatedly, as, for instance, when He referred to disciples who fulfill the will of God as being His Mother, brothers, and sisters. It lies within our power, then, to become "God's Mother." This we can accomplish in a twofold manner a) by accepting the "Word of God" spiritually, i.e., by "hearing the Word and keeping it" (the Fore-Mass); b) by receiving the living Word of God in the Eucharist, thereby becoming in a more realistic manner a "Mother to God." With this approach the celebration of a feast in Mary's honor will always be a thrilling religious experience.

Into the Mass formulary, like a golden thread, is woven the theme of Mary's divine Motherhood. Upon entering the house of God (which in itself typifies Mary), we greet the "holy Mother who bore the King of heaven and earth" in a composition by the ancient Christian poet Sedulius, and then continue with the Church's bridal song, Psalm 44. The latter is peculiarly applicable to Mary, the Queen of Christ's brides — the saints. The two Readings continue to accent the Motherhood of Mary.

In the *Epistle*, divine Wisdom (viz., Christ) tells us that Mary made her abode in the holy city of Sion and took root in a chosen people; i.e., Christ entered the womb of the Virgin, became man,

and founded the Church, the new Sion. Thus, in a mystical sense, the Epistle refers to Mary's physical and spiritual motherhood of the Church and of individual souls. "My abode is in the full assembly of the saints!" How true, particularly now at Mass! The assembled congregation represents the Church; upon her divine Wisdom, Christ, mercifully descends in the holy Sacrifice and "takes root." The double *Alleluia* is followed by a versicle that refers to the work of redemption now completed by Christ through the resurrection: "The rod of Jesse has blossomed, a Virgin has given birth to God and Man! God has restored peace by uniting in Himself the lowest to the highest."

The *Gospel* leads us to the foot of the Cross where we hear the memorable words Jesus spoke to His mother and to St. John: "Woman, behold your son. Son, behold your Mother." During the paschal season the liturgy recalls this particular scene to remind us that Christ gave Mary to John as a mother; and in John, to all of us. Since the first Good Friday, Mary is the Mother of Christendom.

Mary's praises continue with the *Offertory*: "You are blessed, O Virgin Mary, for you bore the Creator of the universe. While ever remaining a Virgin you gave birth to Him who made you, alleluia." Again, *Theotokos* theology.

In the light of what was said above the *Communion* message: "Blessed is the womb of the Virgin Mary, that bore the Son of the eternal Father," applies to the Church and individual souls. Mary is the supreme model.

In the Divine Office St. Augustine draws some pointed comparisons between history's two greatest women: "By a woman came death, and by a woman life; through Eve destruction, through Mary salvation. The former, when tempted, followed the tempter; the latter, remaining immaculate, give birth to the Savior. Willingly Eve accepted the beaker handed her by the serpent and offered it to her husband; and from it both drank death unto themselves. But Mary, filled from above with heavenly graces, gave birth to the Life that can make dead flesh live. And who was responsible for this? The Virgin's Son, the Spouse of virgins! It was He who made her a mother while keeping her a virgin."